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# USSR REPORT MILITARY AFFAIRS

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## MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

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Except where indicated otherwise in the table of contents the following is a complete translation of the Russian language monthly journal VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL.

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## ROLE OF ARTILLERY IN KURSK BATTLE TRACED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 83 (signed to press 1 Jul 83) pp 12-18

[Article by Mar Art G. Peredel'skiy: "Particular Features of the Combat Employment of Artillery in the Battle of Kursk"]

[Text] By the start of the Battle of Kursk, the might of the artillery had risen significantly. The troops began receiving self-propelled artillery mounts [SAU] of varying caliber and the heavy M-31 rockets. The antitank artillery received new, more maneuverable 57-mm antitank cannons.<sup>1</sup> Artillery breakthrough corps were organized and these had two artillery breakthrough divisions and one rocket artillery division (over 1,000 guns, mortars and launchers for the M-31 rockets).<sup>2</sup> In the beginning of April 1943, antitank brigades began to be formed consisting of three regiments each. With the setting up of such large artillery formations, the possibility increased of massing the artillery and maneuvering it broadly in the aim of the quantitative and qualitative reinforcing of the armies fighting in the sector of the main thrust.

Organic artillery also underwent further development. In a rifle division the number of 120-mm mortars increased from 18 to 21 and antitank cannons from 30 to 48. In addition to the previously existing cannon regiment (18 152-mm howitzer cannons) and mortar regiment (36 120-mm mortars), from April 1943 an all-arms army included an antitank artillery regiment (with 24 76-mm cannons) and an antiaircraft artillery regiment (16 37-mm cannons).<sup>3</sup>

A large portion of the artillery was converted to mechanical traction. The new high-speed tracked Ya-12 tractor was adopted. In the artillery units, the control and reconnaissance equipment was improved.

In the course of the preparations for the forthcoming operations, the artillery units organized effective combat training. Great attention was paid to developing in the personnel the firm skills of conducting effective combat against the new enemy heavy tanks. For this purpose, special ranges were built in the armies. Mock-up tanks were set up at them, both moving and bobbing up for a short time in different areas of the range. The tank hunting teams as well as the crews of the antitank rifles which were specially organized in each brigade also trained in firing against the mock-up tanks.<sup>4</sup>

The skills in fire control were improved. In the armies courses were conducted for the artillery officers and in the course of these they trained in rapidly calling in and opening planned and unplanned artillery fire and maintaining contact with cooperating troops. The antiaircraft artillery troops trained in firing at air targets and in shifting fire from air targets to ground ones.<sup>5</sup> The readiness of the artillery for the forthcoming battles was inspected by special commissions directly in its battle formations.

The party political apparatus and the party and Komsomol organizations carried out extensive work to prepare the personnel. A series of instruction pamphlets was published ("Instructions on Combating the 'Tiger' Tank" and "Instructions to the Artilleryman Who Hunts Enemy Tanks" and others). Many leaflets were published with diagrams of the new Nazi tanks. They gave advice on how to successfully fight against the enemy vehicles. Assemblies of the best tank hunters were held. Political exercises, talks and speeches by the participants in the battles of Moscow and Stalingrad also played a major role in indoctrinating courageous and valorous artillerymen. As a result of the concrete and thorough work, hundreds of thousands of artillerymen by the start of the Battle of Kursk had confidently mastered the combat equipment and weapons and were masters of their job.

The fronts occupying the defensive on the Kursk Salient were reinforced with a large amount of artillery. The Central Front alone received an artillery breakthrough corps, an artillery division, 10 regiments and 1 battalion of rocket artillery (RA), 15 separate cannon and mortar regiments, 6 SAU regiments, 10 tank destroyer artillery regiments and 3 artillery brigades and 2 destroyer brigades. As a total in the troops of both fronts (Central and Voronezh), considering the TOE ground and antiaircraft artillery, there were over 21,000 guns, mortars and RA combat vehicles.<sup>6</sup> This made it possible to surpass the enemy by 2.1-fold in artillery.

For the artillery to successfully carry out the large range of tasks, it had to be skillfully allocated among the field forces, formations and units in the aims of achieving massed use in the interests of the main troop grouping. Having determined the probable directions of enemy operations, the commanders of the fronts and armies in them created strong artillery groupings capable of withstanding the heavy tank and infantry attacks. Thus, the 13th Army of the Central Front which was defending the most important sector was reinforced by the IV Artillery Breakthrough Corps (the 5th and 12th Artillery Breakthrough Divisions and the 5th Guards RA Division with M-30). As a total the field force had 12 artillery regiments from rifle divisions and 41 artillery regiments of the RVGK [Reserve of Supreme High Command]. This totaled 2,934 guns (including 757 antitank ones) and mortars, 105 combat vehicles and 432 RA frames. This made it possible to create a density of 105 guns (including 23.7 antitank), mortars and RA combat vehicles per kilometer of front and this was a maximum artillery density on the defensive not only in the Great Patriotic War, but also in World War II as a whole.

The command of the artillery in the armies fighting in the most crucial sectors of both fronts was organized differently. In the 13th Army of the Central Front virtually all the artillery was employed on a centralized basis remaining under the army. In the armies of the Voronezh Front it was assigned to the first

echelon rifle divisions and army artillery groups were not set up. This was brought about by the specific conditions of the operational situation. For example, the 13th Army had a comparatively narrow (32 km) defensive zone. The IV Artillery Breakthrough Corps of the RBGK was an artillery group for reinforcing an army and in terms of the number of first echelon rifle corps was divided into subgroups, each of which consisted of an artillery breakthrough division. Here the cannon regiments of the divisions comprised the long-range artillery subgroups of the rifle corps while the howitzer and mortar regiments formed close support artillery reinforcement groups for the first echelon rifle divisions, remaining under the commander of the artillery breakthrough corps. Such an organization of artillery control complicated its cooperation with the infantry but provided a possibility of rapidly maneuvering (by fire and in moving) large artillery groups in the course of the defensive engagement to any threatened sector.<sup>7</sup>

In the first echelon rifle divisions on both fronts, close support artillery groups were organized and these included the TOE and attached artillery. The RA regiments were left in the reserve of the divisional commanders.

In preparing for the operation, particular attention was paid to creating the fire plan, to organizing the artillery-based antitank defenses as well as to the questions of enemy fire damage when the troops went over to a counteroffensive. The defensive fire plan was created in the aim of hitting the enemy during its concentration and deployment for the offensive; to repel the attack of enemy troops ahead of the forward defensive edge; to destroy the groupings which drove deep into our defenses; to support the counterattacks of the second echelons and reserves.

In all the armies the basis of the artillery fire plan was the sections and lines for concentrated and barrage (rolling and fixed) fire as well as the defensive fire task in depth (DON)<sup>8</sup> on the approaches to the defenses, in front of the forward edge, on the flanks and boundaries and deep in our defenses. For example, in the 13th Army a rolling barrage was prepared in 47 sections: in 22 ahead of the forward edge and in 25 deep in our defenses. As a total ahead of the forward edge a rolling barrage covered around 10 km of the army's defensive zone, that is, approximately 30 percent of the entire defensive front. The fixed barrage fire was planned in the formation only in the most important sectors on a front of around 8 km. Almost over all the remaining army defensive front directly ahead of the forward edge, a large number of concentrated fire areas was prepared.<sup>9</sup>

In setting up the artillery system and fire plan, consideration was given to the need to solve the problems of hitting the enemy in the period of the artillery counterbombardment. Particular attention was given to organizing this on both fronts. Thus, in the directive of the artillery commander of the Central Front of 22 March 1943 it was stated: "Long-range artillery fire is basically planned against the enemy artillery, staffs and defensive centers; that of the divisional artillery against the lines and areas of the probable accumulation of forces for an attack...."<sup>10</sup>

On the Central Front, counterbombardment was planned in the zone of the 13th Army and on the flanks of the 48th and 70th Armies according to four variations.

This was to be based on battery counterbombardment in the aim of preventing the artillery softening up for the enemy's attack and to paralyze the actions of its artillery during the period of artillery support for the infantry offensive. On the Voronezh Front, counterbombardment had been planned in the zones of the 6th and 7th Guards Armies and the 40th Army. Its basic task was to destroy the accumulations of enemy infantry and tanks. The duration of artillery counterbombardment was 30-40 minutes. It was planned with the making of 5-10-minute artillery strikes at the beginning and at the end. In the interval between the artillery strikes, there was to be 20-minute steady firing with a total consumption of 0.25 units of fire.

In the zone of the 13th Army of the Central Front, artillery counterbombardment started at 0230 hours on 5 July. In contrast to the planned schedule, methodical neutralization was not carried out but two artillery strikes were made one after the other. The Nazi artillery batteries and staffs were neutralized in the entire defensive zone of the army and concentration areas of personnel and observation posts only in the defensive zones of the 81st and 15th Rifle Divisions. Some 595 guns and mortars and 2 RA regiments were involved in the counterbombardment. Ammunition consumption was 0.25 units of fire. The artillery fired from the basic firing positions. As a result, up to 90 artillery batteries, 60 observation posts and up to 3 infantry regiments were neutralized and 6 ammunition dumps were blown up.

With the start of the enemy's artillery softening up, the army artillery again carried out counterbombardment in front of the entire front of the army and adjacent units but now in a full volume consuming 0.25 units of fire of shells and drawing on the entire previously planned artillery (1,067 guns, mortars and RA combat vehicles). The counterbombardment caused serious damage to the enemy.

On the Voronezh Front, with the start of operations by the enemy reconnaissance subunits at 2230 hours on 4 July, in the zone of the 6th Army the artillery made a 5-minute artillery strike against preplanned targets (17 concentration areas of enemy tanks and infantry, 12 artillery batteries, 17 observation posts and so forth). At 0400 hours on 5 July, a 30-minute artillery counterbombardment commenced in the areas of the 6th and 7th Guards Armies. Nine concentration areas of Nazi troops were subjected to fire damage. The counterbombardment in the area of the 6th Guards Army was carried out according to the plan: the first artillery strike (5 minutes), methodical firing (15 minutes) and a second artillery strike (10 minutes). Ammunition consumption was 0.5 units of fire. According to the intelligence data, as a result of the artillery counterbombardment, just in front of the defensive front of the 6th Guards Army, 10 artillery batteries were neutralized, 14 observation posts were destroyed, up to 50 tanks were hit and up to 4,000 men killed or wounded. There was a disruption in the enemy artillery fire plan, while troop control was disrupted. The offensive by the Nazi troops in this sector started 3 hours later than the planned time.

The representative of Hq SHC [Headquarters Supreme High Command] Mar SU G. K. Zhukov had high praise for the artillery operations. However, in analyzing the results of the counterbombardment, he concluded that both the Central and Voronezh Fronts commenced this too early as the enemy personnel was still in the shelters and the tanks were in their assembly areas.<sup>11</sup>



The Battle of Kursk was a new stage in developing the theory and practice of antitank defense. The massed enemy tank strike was opposed by the massed use of antitank weapons and primarily artillery. The antitank defense was organized according to a single plan for the first time in the Great Patriotic War to the entire defensive depth of the armies (to 30-35 km). The operational density for just the antitank artillery was 16-30 antitank guns per kilometer. With the supremacy of our aviation, this ensured the repelling by just the firing of the antitank artillery of enemy strikes made with a density of 30-60 tanks per kilometer.<sup>12</sup> To a definite degree this predetermined the success of repelling the offensive by the Nazi assault groupings.

In contrast to the defenses at Moscow and Stalingrad, at Kursk the antitank defense system directly or indirectly included, in essence, all the artillery of the first echelon armies, including the rocket and antiaircraft. It was based on antitank strongpoints (PTOP) which were set up, as a rule, in the battalion (company) defensive areas and in the antitank areas equipped independently or as part of the regimental defensive sections. In combating the tanks an exceptionally major role was assigned to the artillery antitank reserves which were a powerful means of maneuvering in the hands of the all-arm commanders of varying levels. These reserves, in contrast to the previous defensive operations, existed in the fronts, the armies, in all the rifle divisions and even in certain rifle regiments.

The army artillery antitank reserves included from one to four tank destroyer artillery regiments (IPTAP) while the front reserves included up to two tank destroyer artillery brigades (IPTABr) and two-four tank destroyer or SAU regiments. The presence of such reserves, the echeloning of them in depth and their skillful maneuvering in the course of the operation provided an opportunity to decisively increase the density of the antitank weapons in the threatened sectors. Thus, from 5 through 9 July 1943, in the defensive zone of the Central Front alone, an additional seven IPTABr and two IPTAP were regrouped to the sector of the main enemy thrust. As a result, the density of antitank artillery in this sector was around 40 guns per kilometer of front and this was one of the crucial conditions for wearing down the Nazi assault tank groupings and checking their offensive.

The defensive engagements on the Kursk Salient showed that deeply echeloned antitank defense set up according to a single plan using all the antitank weapons and all caliber of artillery successfully could withstand the attacks by strong enemy tank groupings.

During the counteroffensive at Kursk, relatively more artillery was employed than in the counteroffensive at Moscow and Stalingrad. While by the start of the offensive at Moscow our troops had 5,000 guns, mortars and rocket launchers, by the start of the counteroffensive at Stalingrad there were over 16,000, and by the start of the counteroffensive at Kursk over 33,000.<sup>13</sup>

The artillery operated in the course of the counteroffensive in a very different operational situation and this predetermined the nature of the tasks being carried out by it and consequently, the particular features of its combat employment. Considering the importance of the forthcoming offensive and the necessity of breaking through enemy defenses with multiple trenches and

multiple zones, the armies advancing in the sectors of the main thrusts of the fronts were reinforced each by an artillery breakthrough corps or division or a large number of separate artillery brigades and regiments of the RVGK. The 11th Guards Army, for example, as reinforcements received the VIII Artillery Breakthrough Corps and the 4th Artillery Breakthrough Division, the 61st Army received the VII Artillery Breakthrough Corps, the 63d Army the II Artillery Breakthrough Corps, the 3d Army the 20th Artillery Breakthrough Division, the 13th Army the IV Artillery Breakthrough Corps and the 70th Army the 1st Guards Artillery Breakthrough Division.

As a result of the decisive concentration of artillery in the sectors of the main thrusts, the artillery density per kilometer of breakthrough sections was from 180 guns, mortars and RA combat vehicles with a caliber of 76 mm and over (the 11th Guards Army) up to 268 (the 5th Guards Army).<sup>14</sup> The increased artillery density to a significant degree helped to win fire superiority with the start of the offensive and to maintain it in the course of combat operations.

In organizing the artillery grouping of the fronts and the armies, the command proceeded primarily from the need to ensure flexibility and continuity of control over its fire and maneuvering and the achieving of dependable cooperation with the infantry, tanks and aviation to the entire depth of the combat tasks of the formations and field forces. The commanders and staffs of the artillery brigades, divisions and corps correspondingly controlled the divisional, corps and army groups and this made it possible for them to provide continuous control over all or a larger portion of their own TOE units and formations.

A new feature was the creation of corps artillery groups and this emphasized the ever-growing role of the corps element, particularly in breaking through the tactical zone of enemy defenses. Searches were made for the most rational organization of fire control for the large artillery formations. For example, the units and formations of the VIII Artillery Breakthrough Corps (11th Guards Army) were used as corps artillery groups and close support groups created in the rifle divisions. However, the corps commander through the commanders of the artillery divisions had an opportunity at any time to take over control of his subordinate units. Control over the fire of the VII Artillery Breakthrough Corps (61st Army) was concentrated in the hands of the corps commander.

Fire damage to the enemy was planned and carried out in the form of an artillery offensive. Here the artillery softening up for the attack in the sectors of the main thrusts of the fronts and armies lasted from 15 minutes to 2 hours 55 minutes. Their configuration varied. Thus, in the zone of the 11th Guards Army in the aim of confusing the enemy initially a 5-minute surprise artillery strike was made with the simultaneous neutralization of enemy installations up to a depth of 10 km. Then followed a 20-minute pause and then a 60-minute registration check. The enemy gained the impression that an attack by our troops would not follow. Then for 55 minutes the artillery conducted methodical fire for destruction and neutralization and after this there was another 25-minute artillery strike. In contrast to the previous operations, the salvos of rocket artillery came not at the end of the last artillery strike but rather at the beginning of it, that is, 15-20 minutes before the start of the infantry and tank attack.

A new procedure was also employed in the course of the very last artillery strike. As a rule, the attack started with the end of the artillery softening up. From the shifting of fire, the enemy could usually determine the time for starting an attack, it left the shelters and prepared to repel the attack. But this time the Nazis were confused. The infantry and tanks went over to the attack in the course of the last artillery strike, that is, before the end of the artillery softening up, and the enemy was caught unprepared.<sup>15</sup>

Artillery support for an attack was provided to the depth of the defenses of the first echelon battalions (regiments) (2-3 km). One should note the organization of the artillery support for the attack in the breakthrough sector of the 5th Guards Army on the Voronezh Front. The artillery supported the attack by a combined method: by a rolling barrage with an increasing fire density to the depth of the first position; by the method of the successive concentration of fire to a depth of the next two kilometers.

For the artillery support for the infantry and tanks deep in the enemy defenses, in the zone of the 5th Guards Army there was the characteristic preparation and firing by corps long-range groups against installations in the second defensive zone from the basic firing positions. This helped to more successfully carry out the fire tasks in committing the mobile groups to the engagement and in the breakthrough by the advancing troops of the second enemy defensive zone without a halt.

In the counteroffensive at Kursk, the maneuvering of the artillery was widely employed. The different timed going over to the counteroffensive by the troops of the Western and Bryansk Fronts (12 July) and the troops of the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts (3 August) made it possible for Hq SHC to shift three artillery breakthrough divisions and one RA division from the Western and Bryansk Fronts to the Voronezh and Steppe. The artillery was also widely maneuvered in the aim of reinforcing the mobile formations (field forces) and all-arms armies committed to the engagement in the course of the operation. However, the short time for regrouping the artillery and the lack of traction (Steppe Front) often necessitated the committing of the artillery units to combat without the corresponding preparation and this told negatively on the effectiveness of their firing activity.

The designated features in the combat employment of artillery in the Battle of Kursk show not only a further rise in its technical equipment and the development of organizational forms but also improved combat skill of the artillery commanders and staffs, the high morale and heroism of the troops.

✓ The experience at Kursk underlays the further improving of the combat employment of artillery on the defensive and offensive both in subsequent operations and in the postwar period.

The experience of the Central and Voronezh Fronts reaffirmed that successfully conducted artillery counterbombardment can significantly weaken the strike force of the enemy attacking troops, reduce their morale and introduce confusion.

Still pertinent is the experience of the broad operational maneuver of the RVCK artillery, the increased depth of the simultaneous hitting of enemy defenses in conducting the artillery softening up for an attack and the wide use of pre-planned massed fire by the artillery units and formations.

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> N. D. Yakovlev, "Ob artillerii i nemnogo o sebe" [About the Artillery and A Little About Oneself], Voenizdat, 1981, p 131.
- <sup>2</sup> "Sovetskaya artilleriya v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945 gg." [The Soviet Artillery in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Voenizdat, 1960, p 204.
- <sup>3</sup> "Artilleriya v nastupatel'nykh operatsiyakh Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne" [Artillery in the Offensive Operations of the Great Patriotic War], Book II, Voenizdat, 1965, pp 27-28.
- <sup>4</sup> TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 766, inv. 154852, file 3, sheet 1.
- <sup>5</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirvoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, Voenizdat, 1976, p 139.
- <sup>6</sup> "Artilleriya v oboronitel'nykh operatsiyakh Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Artillery in the Defensive Operations of the Great Patriotic War], Book II, Voenizdat, 1961, pp 122, 129.
- <sup>7</sup> "Sovetskaya artilleriya v....," pp 210-211.
- <sup>8</sup> The DON were not widely employed since the main defensive zone was in direct contact with the enemy.
- <sup>9</sup> "Artilleriya v obornitel'nykh....," Book II, p 150.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., Book II, p 138.
- <sup>11</sup> G. K. Zhukov, "Vospominaniya i razmyshleniye" [Remembrances and Reflections], Vol 2, Moscow, Izd'vo APN, 1974, pp 168, 170.
- <sup>12</sup> "Kurskaya bitva" [The Battle of Kursk], Moscow, Nauka, 1970, p 234.
- <sup>13</sup> VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 1, 1982, pp 15-16; No 11, 1982, p 39; "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy....," Vol 7, pp 159, 172.
- <sup>14</sup> TsAMO, folio 358, inv. 264711, file 1, sheet 15; file 203, inv. 252144, file 2, sheet 93.
- <sup>15</sup> VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 9, 1967, p 88.

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## NEW DEVELOPMENTS, ROLE OF ARMORED TROOPS IN KURSK BATTLE VIEWED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 83 (signed to press 1 Jul 83) pp 19-25

[Article by Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor, Honored Scientist of the RSFSR, Maj Gen Tank Trps I. Krupchenko: "Particular Features in the Employment of Armored and Mechanized Troops in the Kursk Battle"]

[Text] A distinguishing feature of the Battle of Kursk was that in it both sides employed a large number of tanks. Thus, in the course of the conduct of the defensive engagement by the Soviet troops, both sides involved a total of around 8,000 tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts [SAU] (assault guns). "The Battle of Kursk," commented Mar SU R. Ya. Malinovskiy, "in terms of fierceness and stubbornness of combat had no equal. The momentous tank battles which developed in it were unsurpassed both in terms of the number of tanks involved as well as in the losses of both sides...in this terrible battle the backbone of the Nazi Army was broken...."<sup>1</sup>

For carrying out Operation "Citadel," the Nazis had concentrated 14 tank divisions in the Kursk sector, that is, around 70 percent of all the tank formations existing on the Soviet-German Front.<sup>2</sup> The assault groupings included the best tank divisions of the Wehrmacht such as "Adolf Hitler," "Toten Kopf," "Das Reich," and the motorized division "Grosse Deutschland." The enemy tank formations were reinforced with the new heavy "Tiger" and "Panther" tanks and by the "Ferdinand" assault guns and so forth. As a total by the beginning of July 1943, the Nazi grouping to the north of Kursk had up to 1,200 tanks and assault guns while on the southern face of the Kursk Salient there were up to 1,500 combat vehicles.

The Soviet Command also prepared carefully for repelling the enemy strikes and for the subsequent offensive operations. Improved models of combat equipment were sent to the armored and mechanized troops of the fronts. New tank and SAU units were organized, the number of tank and mechanized formations increased and their organizational structure was improved.

By the summer of 1943, four tank armies of uniform composition had been organized and in July a fifth was formed.

Considering the nature of the forthcoming engagements, Hq SHC by 1 July had concentrated three tank armies (1st, 2d and 5th Guards) in the region of the

Kursk Salient. Subsequently, it planned to use in the Battle of Kursk another two tank field forces, the 3d Guards Tank Army and the 4th Tank Army which had just been formed. Concentrated in the Kursk sector were 15 individual tank and mechanized corps and a large number of separate tank regiments and brigades. As a total by the start of the defensive engagement, in the zones of the Voronezh and Central Fronts, considering the strategic reserves (the Steppe Military District) there were 4,995 tanks and SAU and this was around one-half of the combat vehicles of the operational army.<sup>3</sup>

An overall supremacy for tanks and SAU was on our side. On the northern face of the Kursk Salient, the Soviet troops surpassed the enemy for tanks and SAU by 1.5-fold, and on the southern by 1.1-fold. However, for correctly assessing the ratio of the armored forces of the sides, it is essential to bear in mind that by the summer of 1943, the Soviet armored troops had still a rather significant number of light tanks. Thus, of the 3,444 tanks and SAU on the Central and Voronezh Fronts, over 900 tanks were light ones.<sup>4</sup> For example, in the 1st Tank Army they comprised around 25 percent.<sup>5</sup> In individual formations, the number of light armored vehicles exceeded 30 percent.<sup>6</sup> It is also essential to point out that the staffs of the recently organized tank armies still did not have sufficient experience in troop control.

In the defensive engagement the tank armies and separate tank and mechanized corps of the Central and Voronezh Fronts were to be employed for making counterstrikes according to several variations (for example, the 1st Tank Army prepared five of them while the 2d Tank Army had three) depending upon the assumed axes of the enemy strikes. The formations were concentrated deep in the defenses from 30-50 km behind the line of contact of the sides. The individual tank and SAU regiments and tank brigades were to be used as mobile tank reserves for the commanders of the armies, rifle corps and divisions. They were positioned on tank approaches in the battle formations of the rifle troops within the second and third defensive zones and between them. In this instance when the density of antitank weapons in the first echelon rifle divisions was insufficient, the tank and SAU units and tank brigades occupied the battle formations in the main defensive zone.

Careful preliminary preparations preceded the combat operations of the tank and mechanized troops in the defensive engagement. The commanders of the tank units and formations and their staffs, together with the commanders and staffs of the all-arms artillery, engineer and air units and formations, conducted a number of exercises at which, initially on maps and then in the field, they worked out the possible variations for making counterstrikes and counterattacks against the advancing enemy. Great attention was also paid to the moral-political support for the forthcoming operations. The main question in all the party political work was to make each tankman aware of the importance of the coming battle for the destiny of our motherland.

But still, as is often the case in war, in the course of the defensive engagement the Soviet Command had to take new, unforeseen decisions to employ the armored and mechanized troops. This was particularly true of the employment of the 2d and 1st Tank Armies. Both field formations were to be employed for making counterstrikes according to several variations. But their going over, in the course of combat operations, to a stable defense with the appropriate

engineer organization of the terrain, unfortunately, was not planned. This had to be done during the period of the fierce defensive engagements.

On the first day of the offensive, on the Central Front, the enemy succeeded by a powerful armored thrust to break through the main defensive zone of the 13th Army and by the end of the day to advance to a depth of 6-8 km. In such a situation, the commander of the front adopted a decision as of the morning of 6 July to make a powerful counterstrike and restore the position. In carrying out this task, the basic role was assigned to the XVII Guards Rifle Corps of the 13th Army, to the XVI Tank Corps (commander, Maj Gen Tank Trps V. Ye. Grigor'yev) of the 2d Tank Army (commander, Lt Gen A. G. Rodin) and to the XIX Tank Corps (commander, Maj Gen I. E. Vasil'yev) which with the start of combat operations was taken from the reserve of the front and put under the commander of the 2d Tank Army.

For a number of reasons (a lack of forces, premature and untimed committing to battle, the limited time for organizing cooperation, the weak engineer support and the abrupt change in the task for the XIX Tank Corps), the ultimate goal of the counterstrike, that is, to restore the position of the troops from the 13th Army, was not achieved. At the same time this strike had a positive impact on the course of the defensive operation of the Central Front. The Soviet troops squeezed the enemy some 1-2 km and thwarted its operations. The command of the front gained time for concentrating new forces on the threatened sector.<sup>7</sup> The enemy was halted in front of the second zone and, in suffering losses, was deprived of the opportunity to continue the offensive in the Olkhovatka sector. After the counterstrike the 2d Tank Army with all its formations went over to the defensive, but did not receive an independent defensive zone. Its troops, in cooperation with the formations of the 13th Army, repelled the enemy attempts to break through to Kursk from the north.

Stubborn tank engagements developed also on the Voronezh Front. Here by the end of the first day of the engagement, at a price of enormous losses the enemy had succeeded in disrupting the stability of the defenses of the 6th Guards Army and force a portion of its troops to retreat.<sup>8</sup> In this situation, the commander of the front adopted a new decision to employ the tank army and the reserve tank corps. Instead of making a counterstrike, as had been previously envisaged, he issued orders to bring up the 1st Tank Army, the II and V Guards Tank Corps to the second defensive zone of the 6th Guards Army and, having ordered a stable defense together with its formations, to initially bleed white the advancing enemy and then complete its destruction by a counterstrike. Having completed the march to the new region, the 1st Tank Army (commander, Lt Gen Tank Trps M. Ye. Katukov) by the morning of 6 July had gone over to the defensive in the second zone along a front of 30 km, having the VI Tank and III Mechanized Corps in the first echelon on the line of Melovoye, Yakovlevo. The XXXI Tank Corps was in the second echelon. To the left of the tank army in the region of Luchki the defensive was occupied by the V Guards Tank Corps under Lt Gen Tank Trps A. G. Kravchenko, and in the region of Gosticheva the II Guards Tank Corps of Col A. S. Burdeynyy.

The employment of large tank formations and field forces for the independent holding of defensive zones in depth was a new and very effective form of their operational employment. This sharply increased the stability of the operational

defenses and made it possible to repel attacks by large masses of enemy tanks advancing in narrow sectors of the front.

On the morning of 6 July, having resumed the offensive and committed new forces to the engagement, the enemy hoped with its strong wedge to shatter the defenses of the 6th Guards Army and break out into the operational expanse. But a powerful tank barrier was created on the path of the enemy tank armada and the enemy was unable to break through this by the shortest route to Kursk.

The tank units, formations and field forces fought to hold the defensive lines by combining the fire of dug-in tanks with the maneuvering of a portion of the forces from depth. This made it possible to significantly reduce the losses of combat vehicles from enemy artillery fire and air strikes. However, it must be pointed out that after the enemy had succeeded in confining our troops, due to the lack of time and engineer equipment, trenches were not always built for the tanks and this significantly reduced their survival.

The culmination point in the defensive period of the Battle of Kursk was the tank meeting engagement in the region of Prokhorovka on 12 July 1943. On both sides 1,200 tanks and SAU (assault guns) as well as large air forces were involved. Against the crack tank divisions of the Nazi 4th Tank Army led by one of the most experienced tank commanders of the Wehrmacht, Gen Goth, the counter-strike was made by the 5th Guards Tank Army under the command of Lt Gen Tank Trps P. A. Rotmistrov. The enemy was stopped and then thrown back. The intensity and fierceness of this engagement can be judged from the fact that on just one day the enemy lost up to 400 tanks. Our troops also suffered great losses. Stubborn battles continued another several days in this region, but the turning point in the Battle of Kursk occurred precisely on 12 July in the course of the largest tank meeting engagement of World War II.

The successes of the Soviet troops in the defensive engagements created favorable conditions for going over to a counteroffensive in the Orel and Belgorod-Kharkov sectors. In the course of the offensive operations, the tank and mechanized troops gained rich combat experience. New methods of employing them on the offensive were used. Thus, separate tank regiments, brigades and SAU brigades were assigned to rifle divisions and employed on a centralized basis as part of the tank and SAU close support groups. The density of close support tanks and SAU increased. For example, in the 11th Guards Army it was up to 20-30 armored units per kilometer.

The separate tank and mechanized corps were used as mobile groups for the all-arms field forces. The tank armies of uniform composition were the basic means for the troops of the front to develop the tactical success into an operational one. However, it is essential to consider that many questions of utilizing the new type of tank field forces in the front-level offensive operations were not yet fully solved either on the theoretical or practical level. Some of them had to be solved, in essence, from scratch and this naturally led to individual shortcomings and mistakes. This is particularly apparent in the Orel Offensive Operation.

As is known, in the course of this operation 3d Guards Tank Army of Lt Gen P. S. Rybalko was committed to the engagement on 19 July. For 23 days it had either



independently or in collaboration with the all-arms formations to consecutively bring through the enemy defenses on seven different sectors of the front and twice with the crossing of water obstacles. As the operation developed, in order to ensure the advance of the all-arms field forces, Hq SHC several times changed the direction of its advance. Each appearance of the 3d Guards Tank Army in a new sector put the enemy in a difficult position, it forced it to throw reserves into the engagement and thereby weaken its groupings in other places.<sup>9</sup> The high maneuvering and strike capabilities of the field formation ensured an increased average daily rate of advance for the front's troops.

On 26 July, for exploiting the success in the zone of the 11th Guards Army of the Western Front, the 4th Tank Army under the command of Lt Gen Tank Trps V. M. Badanov was committed to battle. From the very outset, its combat operations did not develop as planned. Instead of exploiting the success in isolation from the all-arms armies, it also had, together with the rifle formations, to consecutively break through four enemy defensive lines which were heavily saturated with antitank weapons and man-made obstacles. Over the 10 days of the offensive, together with the 11th Guards Army, it drove only 25-30 km into the enemy defenses. Regardless of the insignificant headway of the 4th Tank Army, its combat operations were positively felt in the course of the operation. In breaking through the defenses, the army troops drew to themselves the enemy tank and motorized divisions thereby making it easier for other field forces of the Western Front to carry out the combat tasks assigned to them.<sup>10</sup>

The 2d Tank Army also participated in the Orel Operation. Having commenced the offensive on 15 July, in cooperation with the all-arms formations, it broke through the defenses and by 17 July, together with the other armies restored the position which the Central Front had occupied prior to the beginning of the defensive operation. By the end of July, the troops of the front had outflanked the enemy Orel grouping from the south. However, as a whole the advance by the tank army was slight. The problem was that it had not been able to make up for the losses suffered in the course of the heavy defensive battles. This, naturally, influenced both the nature and the results of its combat operations.

In assessing the combat employment of the tank armies in the Orel Operation, in our opinion, it is essential to study with particular care the role of this operation in the overall system of the strategic offensive by the Soviet Armed Forces in the summer of 1943. The problem was that according to the plan of Hq SHC, the offensive operations by our troops in the Orel sector should not only lead to the defeat of the enemy grouping in the area of Orel but also deprive the enemy of the opportunity to shift its reserves to the Belgorod-Kharkov sector. For precisely this reason Hq SHC committed to the battle initially the 3d Guards Tank Army and then the 4th Tank Army. The battles in the Orel sector had a stubborn and fierce nature. "In the little sense of the word," wrote Mar SU K. K. Rokossovskiy in his memoirs, "we had to gnaw through one position after another."<sup>11</sup> Each kilometer of advance demanded great straining of forces, tenacity and military skill from the troops. Under these conditions, the powerful tank strikes shattered the enemy defenses and created a crisis situation for it on now one and then another sector of the front. This actually can explain the reasons for the low rate of advance for the 4th and 2d Tank Armies as well as the frequent changes in the axis of the offensive for the 3d Guards Tank Army. In analyzing, in particular, the employment of

the 3d Guards Tank Army in the Battle of Kursk, Army Gen S. M. Shtemenko has pointed out that its actions "had a crucial influence on the development of the offensive by the troops of the Bryansk Front and played a major role in the successful outcome of the entire operation to defeat the enemy Orel grouping."<sup>12</sup> One cannot help but agree with this, although there were certain shortcomings in the employment of the tank armies in the Orel Operation.

In the Belgorod-Kharkov Offensive Operation, the 1st and 5th Guards Tank Armies comprised the mobile group of the Voronezh Front and this was committed to battle for completing the breakthrough of the defenses and for the subsequent rapid exploitation of the strike in the operational depth. Separate tank and mechanized corps operated on its outside flanks in the aim of covering the tank armies against possible enemy strikes. The offensive on one operational sector of two tank armies was a unique "armored sword" which made a deep splitting strike against the opposing enemy grouping. Such a form of the operational employment of tank field forces proved fully effective and was further developed in the subsequent operations of the Great Patriotic War. While in conducting the Orel Offensive Operation the tank armies, together with the all-arms ones, had participated at full strength in breaking through the entire tactical defensive zone, in the Belgorod-Kharkov sector, they were employed only for completing the breakthrough and only with the forces of the forward brigades.<sup>13</sup>

The experience of conducting the Belgorod-Kharkov Operation showed that the success of an offensive by tank armies in the operational depth of enemy defenses to a significant degree depended upon their continuous and steady cooperation with the rifle troops. In those instances when forward detachments were not assigned from the all-arms armies and their basic forces were very late in reaching the lines occupied by the mobile troops, the mobile troops were forced for a long time to fight without support from the rifle troops and ultimately this limited the depth of their penetration and rate of advance. The success of combat operations for the field forces and formations of the armored and mechanized troops in the operational depth depended largely also upon their cooperation with aviation. They achieved the best results when they skillfully carried out outflankings and deep envelopments of the enemy groupings.

An analysis of the offensive operations in the Battle of Kursk indicates that the use of the new type of tank armies significantly increased the strike force of the Soviet troops, it gave a more fluid nature to the front-level offensive operations and contributed to a sharp increase in their scope. The commanders of the fronts obtained a powerful means of combat possessing high maneuverability and mobility. No other formations of the ground troops at that time could so rapidly change the direction of an advance or make powerful surprise strikes where the enemy least expected them.

The Battle of Kursk marked a beginning to a new stage in the development and improvement of armored equipment, the organizational forms and methods of the combat employment of armored and mechanized troops. Even at the end of 1943, the units and formations began receiving the T-34 tanks with a 85-mm cannon. Later on the heavy IS-2 tanks with a 122-mm cannon and the new ISU-152 and ISU-122 SAU were developed. In the second half of 1943, the TOE of the tank

and mechanized corps included another two SAU regiments and mobile rear services while the tank brigades included a third tank battalion. The measures carried out significantly increased the strike force and maneuverability of the field forces and formations in the tank and mechanized troops, they made it possible to make even stronger strikes against the enemy and carry out offensive operations with decisive goals and had a rapid pace.

The experience of employing the field forces and formations of the armored and mechanized troops in the counteroffensive showed that the greatest success in the operation was achieved in that instance when they were employed not for completing the breakthrough of the tactical zone in the enemy defenses. The diverting of a portion of the forces from the tank armies and individual tank (mechanized) corps for carrying out such tasks was a compulsory measure and was due to the fact that the all-arms armies still did not have the necessary number of close support tanks. Insufficient artillery and air support often led to a situation where the fight for the tactical enemy defensive zone assumed a protracted nature while the tank armies, the tank and mechanized corps suffered unjustified losses and were deprived of the possibility of conducting highly fluid operations in the operational depth.

In conclusion it must be pointed out that, in our view, of greatest interest for the present day is the experience of organizing offensive groups in the course of the defensive, the committing of the tank and all-arms armies and corps to the engagement while on the move, the high pace of breaking through prepared defenses, the conduct of combat operations by units and formations away from the main forces, the decisive maneuvering of men and weapons in the course of the offensive and the defeating of the enemy operational reserves by meeting engagements.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> PRAVDA, 22 June 1961.

<sup>2</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, Voenizdat, 1976, p 143.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp 120, 136, 137.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p 144.

<sup>5</sup> TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 299, inv. 3070, file 188, sheet 6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., folio 315, inv. 4440, file 18, sheet 3.

<sup>7</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 7, p 147.

<sup>8</sup> TsAMO, folio 299, inv. 3070, file 188, sheet 8.

<sup>9</sup> I. Yakobovskiy, "Zemlya v ogne" [Land in Flames], Voenizdat, 1975, p 146.

<sup>10</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy....," Vol 7, p 163.

<sup>11</sup> K. K. Rokossovskiy, "Soldatskiy dolg" [A Soldier's Duty], Voenizdat, 1972, p 225.

<sup>12</sup> S. M. Stemenko, "General'nyy shtab v gody voyny" [The General Staff During the War Years], Book 1, Voenizdat, 1981, pp 234-235.

<sup>13</sup> "Sovetskaya Voennoye Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Vol 4, Voenizdat, 1977, p 539.

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## USE OF ENGINEER TROOPS IN KURSK DEFENSIVE, OFFENSIVE EXAMINED

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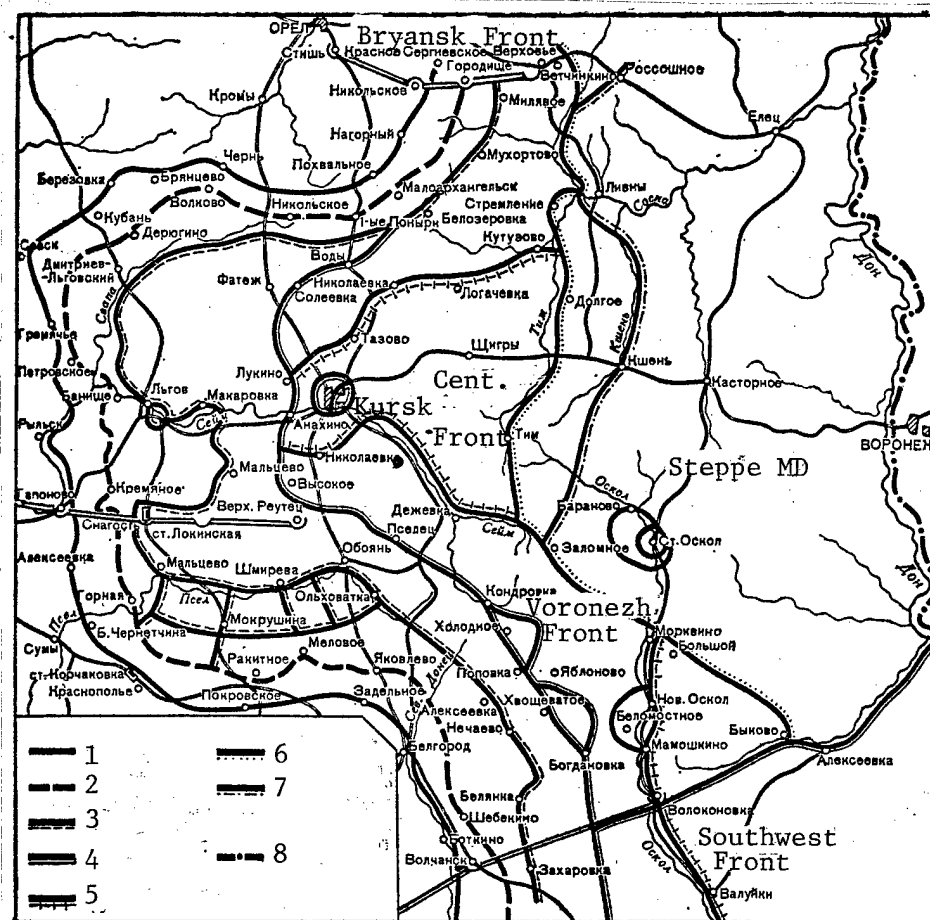
[Article by Candidate of Military Sciences, Docent, Col Gen Engr Trps Ye. Kolibernov, State Prize winner: "Particular Features of Organizing Engineer Support in the Battle of Kursk"]

[Text] For attaining success in the Battle of Kursk broad and the most effective use was made of the diverse forms and methods of engineer support for the combat operations of Soviet troops both on the defensive and in the course of the counteroffensive.

The engineer organization of the defenses was carried out over a long time (about 3 months) and was subordinate to the overall idea of maximally weakening the enemy assault groupings and minimizing the losses of our troops which subsequently, in the course of the counteroffensive, had to make a crushing strike against the enemy. This idea was concretely embodied in the early establishing of defensive zones and lines echeloned to a depth of 250-300 km,<sup>1</sup> in introducing a number of new fortification elements in the engineer organization of the positions, in widely employing highly effective mixed minefields and in the massed carrying out of measures for tactical and operational camouflage.

The creating of insurmountable defenses and the successful organizing of engineer support for the subsequent offensive operations by the Soviet troops were aided by a number of factors, the basic ones being: the use of experience from the previous defensive operations, the wide involvement of all branches of troops in fortifying the positions, a significant increase in the output of engineer weapons, particularly antitank mines, and their mass receipt by the troops, the creation of new formations of engineer troops conforming most to the needs of preparing and conducting offensive and defensive operations. Thus, for organizing the engineer organization of the terrain on the defensive, the creation of front-level headquarters for defensive construction was of important significance and for the engineer support of the offensive, the forming of assault combat engineer brigades, the reforming of mining-engineer into combat engineer, the increased number of pontoon bridge brigades and regiments and the organizing of motor vehicle companies in the fronts for transporting the crossing equipment. The soviet and party bodies and the local population provided great aid to the command of the formations in preparing the defenses in the rear area.

In the successful carrying out of the tasks involved in the engineer support for the troop combat operations, a major role was played by the prompt and complete implementation of requirements contained in the documents of Hq SHC and the General Staff. These were the basis of the engineer preparations for the defense. In particular, in March 1943 the operational army received the "Brief Instructions on Organizing Field Defensive Lines," in April 1943 the "Instructions on the Reconnaissance and Construction of Field Defensive Lines," and in the beginning of July of the same year, the orders of Hq SHC "On the Employment and Crossing of Minefields"<sup>2</sup> the demands of which were used as the basis of the engineer preparations for the defense.



Defensive Zones and Lines on the Kursk Salient

Key: 1--Main defensive zone; 2--Second defensive zone; 3--Rear army zone; 4--First frontal line; 5--Second frontal lines; 6--Third frontal line; 7--Defensive line of Steppe Military District; 8--State frontier.

In a comparatively short period of time, in the area of Kursk and to the east of it three defensive zones and five defensive lines were built (see the diagram) and these underwent greatest development in engineer terms in the sectors of expected enemy strikes. Their length just on the Central Front (chief of engineer

troops, Maj Gen Engr Trps A. I. Proshlyakov) and the Voronezh Front (chief of engineer troops, Maj Gen Engr Trps Yu. V. Bordzilovskiy) was 2,590 km and there were around 6,000 km of trenches and communications trenches in them. In the tactical defensive zone the depth of which reached 15-20 km, two solid defensive zones were equipped in all sectors. The main zone up to 7 km deep consisted of three positions and was created for the first echelon divisions. In the threatened sectors, per kilometer of front in the main defensive zone, up to 10 km of trenches and communications trenches were built.<sup>3</sup> The second zone up to 5 km deep had two positions and was equipped in the threatened sectors for the second echelons of the rifle corps. Also deployed in the second zone was a portion of the forces from the army second echelon (the 13th Army) or the army reserves (the 6th Guards Army). In all the first echelon armies, a rear army zone was prepared for the tactical zone a distance of 20-40 km away from the forward edge of the main defensive zone. This zone in the threatened sectors was occupied on the Central Front by the second echelon of the 13th Army and on the Voronezh Front by formations from armies of the front's second echelon.

Deep in the defenses of the fronts, three defensive lines were prepared each of which was equipped with a defensive zone. In the threatened sectors in the area of the first frontal line there were assembly areas for the tank armies and the reserve formations of the fronts. In the zones of the Central and Voronezh Fronts, 9,333 command and observation posts were built and the structures of these provided protection against artillery shells of 105- and 155-mm caliber and 48,073 artillery and mortar emplacements were dug.<sup>4</sup> The engineer organization of the terrain which included a system of trenches and communications trenches, open platforms and emplacements for all types of weapons, structures of control posts and shelters, provided essential advantages. It made it possible to create a deeper and more flexible fire plan in comparison with a plan based on individual emplacements and casemated weapons emplacements with limited firing sectors. The broad network of trenches and communications trenches helped to increase the activity of troop operations as they were able to move covertly on the battlefield. This also significantly increased the stability of defenses, as the enemy was forced to fire at covered firing points and rifle subunits while the destruction of the trenches required the expenditure of a large amount of ammunition.

Shelters were developed in a direction of simplifying their types and designs and reducing the construction time. Heavy-type shelters were employed as an exception, chiefly in building control posts. The personnel and combat equipment were protected by the wide use of fortification earth-and-timber works of the pit type as well as by spreading out the troops and carrying out various camouflage measures.

By the start of 1943, in addition to the organic combat engineer subunits, the troops of the Central Front had 3 combat engineer brigades, a special purpose engineer brigade and 21 combat engineer, engineer and pontoon bridge battalions. The troops of the Voronezh Front included 3 combat engineer brigades, a special purpose engineer brigade, a pontoon bridge brigade and 35 combat engineer, engineer and pontoon bridge battalions. In preparing the defensive, the engineer troops were used on a strictly centralized basis on a level of the fronts and armies. Their basic tasks were to create a system of obstacles and direct the

organization of fortifications. Prior to the start of the defensive engagement, the combat engineers just in the zone of the Voronezh Front set 637,500 antitank and antipersonnel mines and also prepared 593 km of wire obstacles and over 490 km of nonexplosive antitank obstacles.<sup>5</sup> The average operational density of the mining in the most important sectors was 1,500 antitank and 1,700 antipersonnel mines per kilometer of front, that is, 3- or 4-fold more than in the previous defensive operations.

An important factor which increased the effectiveness of the minefields was the use in them of high explosive incendiary mines (MOF) which were a group of bottles with a combustible fluid (up to 20 units) placed radially under the earth around an antipersonnel mine. The antipersonnel and antitank mixed minefields combined with the system of artillery fire, the firing of individual weapons and air strikes were the basic means ensuring the effective combating of enemy tanks and infantry.

In preparing for the defensive engagements, great attention was given to organizing mobile obstacle construction detachments (POZ). These became an inseparable element in the battle formations of the units, formations and in the operational configuration of the field forces. Their main task was to increase the mine-laying density in the sectors of advance by the enemy assault groupings by maneuvering the engineer subunits with the equipment for the mixed minefields. In cooperation with the artillery antitank reserves, the POZ caused the enemy great losses and reduced the rate of its advance.<sup>6</sup> They consisted of one or two combat engineer companies or an engineer battalion reinforced by submachine gunners. Each detachment was first indicated the sector or zone of operations. For example, in the 13th Army POZ No 1 was to cover the sector to Olkhovatka, POZ No 2 the sector to Ponyri and POZ No 3 the sector to Maloarkhangelsk. Depending upon the set task, the supply of mines for the army POZ varied and was 500-1,500 and more units. For supplying the POZ with mines and explosives, under the engineer headquarters of the fronts and armies supplies of mines (10,000-20,000 units) and explosives were organized and motor transport was assigned (at least 10 vehicles) ready upon the first request of any POZ to deliver them to the destination. The POZ were controlled by the commanders of the engineer battalions from which these detachments were assigned. As a rule, the commanders of the rifle divisions set the tasks for the POZ.<sup>7</sup>

In order to describe the degree of involvement of engineer troops in repelling the enemy strikes in the course of the defensive engagement, one has merely to give the following example. With the start of the offensive by the Nazi troops, in the zone of the Central Front around 100 combat engineer companies were moved up into the threatened sector and operated in the battle formations of the first echelon divisions of the 13th and 70th Armies. This was 40 percent of their entire number available to the front. In the course of the defensive engagement they set out 35,000 antitank mines in the sectors of advance of the enemy groupings.<sup>8</sup> In the zone of the Voronezh Front, 55,000 mines were set directly in the course of combat operations.<sup>9</sup> Along with the POZ here small groups of combat engineers operating as tank hunters fought the enemy.



Everywhere the path of the advancing enemy was blocked by the mixed minefields which not only caused losses of personnel and equipment and hindered their operations, but also to a significant degree helped to increase the effectiveness of the antitank artillery fire. Just on the first day of the battles, in the zone of the 13th Army the Nazis lost 110 tanks. Of this number 32 combat vehicles were blown up by minefields. From 5 through 9 July, the enemy lost 140 tanks and assault guns in the minefields set by the combat engineers of just the first guards special purpose engineer brigade which operated in the defensive zones of the 13th and 70th Armies of the Central Front. Up to 2,500 Nazis were destroyed by mines and the fire of individual weapons. Around 600 enemy soldiers and officers met their end on electrified obstacles.<sup>10</sup> On just 5 July, in the zone of the 6th and 7th Guards Armies, the enemy lost 67 tanks and up to 2 infantry battalions on the mines set by the POZ.<sup>11</sup>

The experience of the defenses at Kursk confirmed the sharp rise in the importance of maneuvering the mixed minefield equipment in the course of battle. Characteristically up to two-thirds of the enemy tank losses in the obstacles occurred in minefields set or made ready in the course of the enemy offensive.

In the course of the defensive engagement, the engineer troops carried out a large amount of work to support troop maneuvers. Just in the zones of the Central and Voronezh Fronts, for these purposes they built and repaired over 3,000 km of road and 250 bridges with a total length of 6,500 linear meters.<sup>12</sup>

The counteroffensive by the Soviet troops, the component parts of which were the Orel and Belgorod-Kharkov Offensive Operations, as is known, was developed along a broad front. First it was necessary to break through a deeply echeloned enemy defense which had been prepared over an extended time. In the Orel sector, the Nazis had created a strong defense with a developed system of field fortifications and man-made obstacles. Its main zone consisted of strongpoints and centers of resistance adapted to all-round defense and interconnected by a system of trenches and communications trenches. Here also they had built dug-outs and pillboxes and had set up armored machine gun nests ("crabs"). Deep in the defenses, predominantly along the Oka, Neruch and Resseta Rivers, the enemy had prepared eight intermediate and rear defensive lines as well as a series of switch positions. The Nazis had also fortified the Belgorod-Kharkov bridgehead ahead of time. For covering Kharkov from the north, seven defensive lines had been prepared and for covering it from the east, three of them. In addition, Kharkov was girdled by two strong circular perimeters interconnected by switch positions. The city was completely prepared for street battles.

The breaking through of the deeply echeloned enemy defenses required the carrying out of large-scale measures for its engineer support and the use of new formations of engineer troops, the assault combat engineer brigades which were designed predominantly for engineer support of the breakthrough of enemy fortified zones and the storming of cities. Each of these included five assault combat engineer battalions, companies for engineer reconnaissance, static flamethrowers, command, mine-detecting dogs as well as a light crossing set. The personnel of the units and subunits in the brigades was trained in conducting close combat, the crossing and laying of obstacles, demolition and river crossing, as well as actions as part of assault groupings in supporting attacks on enemy armored, earth-and-timber firing points and other fortifications.

In preparing for the Orel Offensive Operation on the Western and Bryansk Fronts, the necessary grouping of men and weapons was created ahead of time and these included engineer troops. Engineer preparations were carried out in the jump-off areas for the offensive. The organization of engineer support and the use of the engineer troops in this offensive operation had a number of particular features. The developed system of defensive zones and positions created better conditions than in the previous operations for the engineer preparation of the jump-off areas for the offensive by the troops of the fronts. However, the sharp increase in the densities of the rifle troops, artillery and tanks as well as the narrowing of the zones of advance and the breakthrough sectors necessitated an additional significant amount of work. For example, in preparing the jump-off area for the offensive by the troops of the 11th Guards Army, in addition to the existing system of trenches, within the main defensive zone, 740 km of trenches and communications trenches were dug, and more than 500 observation posts, more than 1,350 dugouts and shelters and 3,700 artillery emplacements were built. For supporting the maneuvering of the troops, the road network was significantly expanded with the building of bridges and the building of alternate submerged bridges and fords on the Zhidra and Vytebet Rivers.<sup>13</sup> While in the course of the offensive operations during the winter campaign of 1942-1943, including during the counteroffensive at Stalingrad, the all-arms formations had not received engineer reinforcements or received an insignificant amount of them while the basic mass of the engineer forces was concentrated in the hands of the army command, in the counteroffensive at Kursk, on the contrary, due to the presence of the enemy's deep tactical defensive zone, a large portion of the engineer troops was concentrated in the first echelon divisions in the aim of supporting their breakthrough. An example of this use of the engineer troops in this operation can be seen from the organizing of engineer support for the offensive by the 11th Guards Army. In its breakthrough sector some 14 km long were concentrated seven engineer (combat engineer) companies per kilometer.<sup>14</sup>

The creation of a strong grouping of engineer troops in the 11th Guards Army of the Western Front and in the Armies of the Bryansk and Central Fronts made it possible to successfully carry out the entire range of tasks for the engineer support of preparing and conducting the offensive. The combat engineers cut passageways through our own obstacles during the two nights preceding the attack. On the night before the offensive, they also completed the passages through the enemy obstacles calculating one or two passages per rifle company and three or four per tank brigade.<sup>15</sup>

One should also note the organization of the traffic control service on the passageways in the 11th Army. Previous experience had shown that the methods of designating and marking the passages in dry weather, when dust was raised, were not sufficiently effective. For this reason, special guides were included in the traffic control service. Moreover, a post of two or three men was assigned to each passageway for its security, for broadening it and for escorting the equipment moving across it. After the attacking echelon of the rifle troops had moved across, solid mine clearing was carried out in the zone of committing the tank formations. This was the case in the VIII Guards Rifle Corps, in the zone of which the V Tank Corps was committed to the engagement in an area 500 m wide.<sup>16</sup>

In the course of the Orel Operation, the engineer troops of the Western, Bryansk and Central Fronts successfully carried out not only the tasks assigned to them of supporting the breakthrough of the deeply echeloned defense. By laying minefields and electrified obstacles they contributed largely to the thwarting of the enemy counterattacks and by building passageways through the obstacles and providing crossing over water obstacles they contributed to the successful development of the counteroffensive, to the regroupings of the troops and to the committing to battle and combat of the tank corps and armies. The engineer formations and units also operated actively in the course of the storming of Bolkhov, Orel and other cities. Thus, in the liberation of Bolkhov, the 2d Assault Combat Engineer Brigade of Lt Col V. I. Smirnov particularly distinguished itself, and in the storming of Orel, the 8th Assault Combat Engineer Brigade of Col A. N. Artsishevskiy. The subunits of these brigades were used as part of the assault groups. In employing explosive charges and flame-throwers, they destroyed the enemy fortified installations, they made passageways through obstacles and openings in building walls and laid minefields on the paths of the counterattacking and retreating enemy units.

Engineer support for the offensive of the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts was successfully provided in the Belgorod-Kharkov Operation. A characteristic feature in the employment of the engineer formations on the Voronezh Front<sup>17</sup> was that they were attached chiefly to the armies fighting in the sector of the main thrust. This increased the possibilities of carrying out the engineer support tasks within a short period of time. The all-arms armies were also assigned tasks for engineer support for the committing of the front's mobile groups to the engagement. The engineer formations and units left directly under the commander of the front were occupied chiefly with the equipping and maintaining of the routes assigned for the maneuvering of the troops as well as carrying out operational engineer surprise and deception measures.

The basic forces of the engineer troops in the Steppe Front<sup>18</sup> were used on a centralized basis for supporting the regrouping of the troops and their offensive in the sector of the main thrust. In preparing for the operation, they built and repaired 90 bridges, they equipped 62 fords, they laid 47 km of road and repaired around 100 km,<sup>19</sup> and supported the crossing of the troops from the front's assault grouping across the Sazhnovskiy and Lipovyy Donets Rivers. The concealed arrival of our troops in this inaccessible area was unexpected for the enemy and along with the carrying out of surprise and deception measures on the Voronezh Front contributed largely to the success of the Belgorod-Kharkov Operation. In the course of the offensive, the engineer troops of the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts ensured the passing of the battle formations of the first echelon divisions through the enemy obstacles, the moving up of the 1st and 5th Guards Tank Armies to the start line, their further breaking through of the enemy's tactical defensive zone and a decisive advance into the operational depth.

The nature and results of the combat employment of engineer troops in the area of Bogodukhov and Akhtyrka, where the enemy endeavored to halt the troops of the Voronezh Front, confirmed the increased importance of broadly maneuvering the engineer resources opposite the enemy counterstrike groupings. The combat engineers of the 6th and 14th Assault Combat Engineer Brigades particularly distinguished themselves. In laying minefields, they checked the advance of the

enemy tanks and gained time for maneuvering reserves to the threatened sectors. The enemy lost 82 tanks and assault guns in the minefields around Bogodukhov and Akhtyrka.

In the course of the further offensive by the troops of the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts, the engineer troops carried out important tasks in supporting the crossing of natural obstacles and the clearing of the terrain of mines. As a total in the course of the counteroffensive, just the engineer troops of the Steppe Front removed and deactivated more than 233,000 mines, 1,700 land mines and booby traps. They cleared 534 km<sup>2</sup> of territory and 1,640 km of roads.

The engineer support experience gained in preparing and conducting the defensive and offensive operations in the Battle of Kursk has become the basis for further developing the art of the combat employment of engineer troops. First of all, it has shown that a system of defensive zones prepared to the entire depth of the troops' operational configuration with the broad use of trenches, communications trenches and a developed network of routes sharply increases the activity of the troops on the defensive and their survival against enemy weapons and creates favorable conditions for the prompt and concealed maneuvering of the resources to threatened sectors. During the period of the defensive on the Kursk Salient an increased role was played by the system of mixed minefields in combating the advancing enemy tank groupings. The minefields not only forced the enemy to suffer significant losses in tanks but also impeded their maneuvering, creating favorable conditions for the highly effective employment of other antitank weapons. In the course of the Battle of Kursk, the POZ became an inseparable element in the operational configuration (battle formation) of the troops.

The experience of this battle has fully confirmed the advisability of the brigade organization of the engineer troops as this facilitated their massed use and increase the possibilities in carrying out the basic tasks of engineer support of the operations.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 "Inzhenernyye voyska v boyakh za Sovetskuyu Rodinu" [Engineer Troops in the Battles for the Soviet Motherland], Voenizdat, 1970, p 157.
- 2 "Sbornik boyevykh dokumentov Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Collection of Combat Documents of the Great Patriotic War], No 5, Moscow, 1947, p 47.
- 3 TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 318, inv. 16772, file 2, sheet 35.
- 4 VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 6, 1968, p 66.
- 5 "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, Voenizdat, 1976, p 138; "Inzhenernyy voyska v boyakh...", p 158.

- <sup>6</sup> Engineer battalions for operating as POZ were assigned with the going over of the enemy to the offensive.
- <sup>7</sup> "Bitva pod Kurskom" [The Battle of Kursk], Book 1, The Defensive Engagement. Voenizdat, Izd. GSh VS SSSR, VIU, 1946, p 71.
- <sup>8</sup> TsAMO, folio 318, inv. 16772, file 2, sheet 36.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., folio 69, inv. 24771, file 103, sheet 22.
- <sup>10</sup> V. K. Kharchenko, "Spetsial'nogo naznacheniya...", [Special Purpose], Voenizdat, 1973, pp 98, 102.
- <sup>11</sup> "Inzhenernyy voyska v boyakh...", p 163.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., p 159.
- <sup>13</sup> TsAMO, folio 11 gv. A., inv. 595934, files 36, 76, 82.
- <sup>14</sup> "Inzhenernyy voyska v boyakh...", p 167.
- <sup>15</sup> TsAMO, folio 443, inv. 9630, file 2, sheet 103.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., folio 11 gv. A., inv. 5934, file 36, sheets 92, 93.
- <sup>17</sup> The Voronezh Front included two assault combat engineer brigades, one combat engineer brigade, a pontoon bridge brigade, a special purpose engineer brigade, 17 separate engineer, combat engineer as well as pontoon bridge battalions and organic combat engineer subunits.
- <sup>18</sup> The Steppe Front included 3 combat engineer brigades, a special purpose engineer brigade and 14 separate engineer, combat engineer and pontoon bridge battalions and organic combat engineer subunits.
- <sup>19</sup> TsAMO, folio 233, inv. 274944, file 1, sheet 5.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., folio 236, inv. 34580, file 45, sheet 113.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., folio 223, inv. 274944, p 41.

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## ROLE, TECHNICAL PROGRESS OF SIGNAL TROOPS IN KURSK BATTLE TRACED

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[Article by Col Gen Sig Trps (Ret) I. Bulychev\*: "The Signal Troops in the Kursk Battle"]

[Text] In the Battle of Kursk the signal troops had to provide dependable control in the creation of a deeply echeloned defense, in the course of the defensive operations and in the going over of the troops to the counteroffensive from a defensive position virtually without any pause and under the conditions of the broad maneuvering of large operational and strategic reserves. Both in the defensive engagement and in the counteroffensive, it was essential to organize communications of several fronts, large tank and air field forces and formations and artillery units.

By the summer of 1943, due to the constant concern of the Communist Party for the improving of all the Armed Services, branches of troops and special troops, major changes had occurred in the signal troops. They began to receive in mass numbers new types of radios including the RAT and RAF-KV-3 to replace the obsolete 11AK and 5AK.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, in the tactical element of command they began using the RBM-5 radios<sup>2</sup> which in terms of compactness, weight, convenience and simplicity of operation as well as economy of consumed power had no equal among the same types of radios in Germany, the United States and England. In addition, the troops began receiving the A-7 radio,<sup>3</sup> our nation's first ultrashortwave radio with frequency modulation and high frequency stability; this was developed by a group of Soviet engineers under the leadership of G. T. Shitikov and was quickly produced by industry. It was employed in the battalion and regimental networks as well as for controlling the fire of an artillery battalion and battery.

Due to the sharp increase in tank production and the formation of the mechanized and tank corps and armies, the GKO [State Defense Committee] adopted a decision to accelerate the production of the new models of tank radios such as the 9R,

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10R, 12RT and 12RTK. The deliveries of these radios to the troops (1943) surpassed the 1942 level by almost 2.5-fold.<sup>4</sup>

In 1943, new special radios such as Prima, Sever and others were developed and put into production. By the start of the Kursk Battle all the fronts had received printing equipment for the Almaz radio. Its deliveries increased by 17-fold in comparison with the previous year. This made it possible to provide printing communications by radio for all fronts with Hq SHC and the General Staff.

Of great importance for improving the supply of the Soviet Army with radios was their standardization which was carried out by the summer of 1943 and a reduction in the output of obsolete types of radios. While in the first period of the war, our industry supplied the troops with over 20 types of radios, in the middle of 1943 there were just seven types,<sup>5</sup> but with higher technical and operating characteristics.

Substantial changes also occurred in the telephone and telegraph equipment. The troops began receiving the new TAI-43 telephones with inductive dialing and these surpassed the foreign models of those times. This made it possible to create telephone networks with a single dialing system from the staff of the front down to the rifle regiment, inclusively.

During this period the Soviet Army also received the PK-10 and PK-30 switchboards which surpassed the old types of switchboards in their tactical and technical performance.<sup>6</sup> Instead of the 2BD-2G telegraph, the troops received the new Baudot 2BDA-43 set with improved technical and operating specifications and a lower weight.<sup>7</sup>

The increase in the output of communications equipment by domestic industry made it possible to increase the supply of communications equipment to the troops. For example, the equipping of the troops of the Voronezh Front by 1 July 1943, in relation to December 1942, had increased: by 2-3-fold for radios, by 1.5-fold for telegraph equipment and by 1.8-fold for switchboards.<sup>8</sup> A similar situation existed on the other fronts involved in the Kursk Battle.

The improved supply of the troops with communications equipment provided an opportunity to carry out a number of organizational changes in the signal troops. For strengthening the supply of radio equipment for the fronts and armies operating on the main sector, in June 1943, separate radio battalions and radio companies of the Reserve of the Supreme High Command [RVGK] were organized. In the aim of increasing the rate of restoring the telephone and telegraph communications centers on the main communications lines from the General Staff to the fronts and individual armies, separate stationary telephone-telegraph companies began to be established. In the spring of 1943, they began employing the special purpose communications centers (USON). Separate communications battalions of the RVGK were organized for their deployment and servicing.<sup>9</sup>

In May 1943, the GKO approved new TOE for the signals headquarters of the fronts and the signals departments of the armies. Four departments were additionally included in the signals headquarters of a front. Positions were

introduced for the chiefs of the signals links to the armies and the deputy signals chief of a front for the auxiliary control posts. The number of personnel in an army signals department was more than doubled and a department consisted of five sections.<sup>10</sup> The experience of combat operations confirmed the advisability of these changes.

Hq SHC devoted serious attention to organizing command and communications in the Battle of Kursk. Even in the spring of 1943, the chief of the Main Signals Directorate of the Soviet Army, Lt Gen Sig Trps I. T. Peresyarkin was sent to the region of the Kursk Salient along with a group of generals and officers. The major task of this group was to provide communications of the Headquarters representatives with the fronts and the General Staff. The special purpose communications center and the mobile communications center of the General Staff played a major role in carrying it out. The communications center was set up and serviced by a separate signals regiment of the RVCK. Under the leadership of Maj Gen Sig Trps N. A. Borzov, during the period from April through July 1943, the personnel of the center carried out a large amount of work in its equipping, improving and the construction of main communications lines.

In relying on the existing state network and in using the extensive system of auxiliary communications centers and monitoring-testing points of the fronts and armies, the USON successfully carried out the tasks assigned to it. From 30 April 1943, it provided dependable high frequency (HF) telephone, Baudot telegraph and radio communications as well as message carrying communications with Hq SHC, the General Staff, the Central, Voronezh, Steppe (up to 10 July 1943, the Steppe Military District), Bryansk, Western and Southwestern Fronts, with the armies of these fronts and the reserve formations and field forces. Communications were provided simultaneously with each staff over two links. The communications lines and centers were securely protected against enemy air actions and this to a large degree guaranteed its dependability.

Maj Gen Sig Trps P. D. Miroshnikov, Cols V. G. Kozhetev, F. F. Il'yukevich and other signal troops put much labor, strength and energy into preparing the communications system of the General Staff for the Kursk Battle.

By the start of the battle, the communications system of the General Staff was ordered, flexible, dependable and stable. It had a sufficient number of bypass links and spare channels. The use of the printing equipment for the Almax radio opened up broad opportunities to use the radio and increased the reliability, promptness and continuity of communications.

The planning, organizing and support for communications in each of the fronts participating in the Kursk Battle had their particular features. The control of the troops of the Central Front during the defensive period of the battle was to be carried out from the command and auxiliary control posts as well as by the second echelon of the front's field headquarters (PTU). The front's command post was located in the area of the second frontal defensive line, a distance of around 60 km from the forward edge while the auxiliary control post was up to 10 km away from the forward edge. The second echelon of the front's field headquarters was in the region of Nikolskoye.



For increasing the stability of control in the course of the defensive engagement, there were plans to deploy two alternate command posts [ZKP] for the front. One of them was completely equipped in engineer terms and the other in communications terms. All the basic communications links ran through it. At the second alternate command post there was engineer equipment for the departments and sections of the staff, the communications centers and connecting lines from the wire communications links running nearby. There was no telegraph and switching equipment at this ZKP.

Control of the troops of the Voronezh Front was also planned from the command and alternate command posts as well as the second echelon of the front's field headquarters. The creation of auxiliary control posts (VPU) was not envisaged. The front's command post was located in Rzhava. Alternate command posts were to be deployed in regions of the population points of Cheremoshnoye, Bobryshevo, Manturovo and Gorodishche, and the ZKP in the regions of Cheemoshnoye and Bobryshevo were to be fully ready for work. These could immediately assume control over the front's troops with the loss of this from the basic command post.

The ZKP in Manturovo was designed to ensure control over the front's troops if the enemy broke through the defenses and our troops were forced to retreat. Here a large amount of work was done on the engineer equipping of the shelters and work areas, the elements of the communications center and on building the lines. As a result, the communications center of this ZKP was able, if necessary, to assume the wire communications with all the staffs of the armies, the adjacent fronts and the General Staff. Analogous work was carried out in the area of Gorodishche. In the event of the retreat of the front's troops to the second frontal defensive line, an area was reconnoitered for setting up a ZPK close to Staryy Oskol.

In the armies of the Central and Voronezh Fronts, command, alternate command posts and one or two auxiliary control posts in addition to three or four observation posts were organized.<sup>11</sup> Here the command posts of the armies, as a rule, were positioned between the second and army defensive zones at a distance of 10-30 km from the forward edge.

The signals chiefs of the fronts (Central Front, Maj Gen Sig Trps P. Ya. Maksimenko and Voronezh, Maj Gen Sig Trps A. F. Novinitskiy) planned communications in the forthcoming operation, considering the adopted system of control posts and the presence of TOE communications resources as well as the necessity of organizing communications to ensure dependable troop control not only during the period of the defensive engagement but also in the forthcoming counter-offensive. During the defensive period of the battle, wire communications was the basis of ensuring control and for this reason great attention was given to organizing it on all fronts.

By the end of June 1943, the Central Front was maintaining dependable wire communications with the General Staff, the Bryansk and Voronezh Fronts and with the subordinate armies over at least two territorially separated links. These lines ran through the ZPK. The second echelon of the field headquarters had permanent contact with the second echelons of the army field headquarters and with the controls. There was dependable command of the front's troops over

each of three variations of the assumed course of the defensive operations with all the prepared control posts. In the event of the failure of the basic command post, control was to shift to the VPK.

In preparing for the forthcoming combat operations, the line units of the front built 610 km of new permanent overhead lines, they repaired around 750 km of operating line and hung 6,000 km and repaired almost 3,000 km of wire. The construction of new communications lines was planned on links leading to those field forces and formations where they were absent or in insufficient number as well as in the aim of bypassing the lines destroyed by enemy aviation or for ringing the large, major communications centers of Kursk, Fatezh, Dmitriyev-Lgovskiy and the communications centers of the front command posts. New lines were also to be built from the basic trunk lines to the positions of the command and alternate command posts of the front and the armies.

Dependable communications was also prepared in the armies of the Central Front. Of the 48 formations comprising them, 37 had dependable telephone-telegraph while 11 had only telephone communication with the army staffs.<sup>12</sup> The wire communications network was most developed in the expected sectors of the enemy main thrust. In these sectors the largest number of permanent overhead lines with sufficient capacity was built and repaired. In a comparatively narrow sector of the front, there were the communications centers of the 48th, 13th and 2d Tank Armies, the communications centers of the VPU and two ZKP of the front, up to five auxiliary communications centers and the monitoring-testing points with the communications lines between them with a capacity from 2 to 10-12 wires. Such a network of wire communications in the sector of the enemy's main thrust ensured dependable communications and made it possible in a short period of time to establish contact with the troops carrying out a march as well as in the shifting of the control posts in the course of the defensive engagement.

The line communications units of the front by the start of the defensive engagement were so distributed that a separate line signals battalion was assigned to a link for each army. Operational servicing of the communications lines was provided by the separate telegraph operations companies from the separate line communications battalions and partially by the signals units of the NKVD [People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs].

The sufficient number of radial and lateral lines and the extensive network of auxiliary communications centers and monitoring-testing points at their intersection made it possible to promptly and effectively maneuver the telegraph wires and telephone channels.

On the Voronezh Front, for each army, as a rule, wire communications over two links was prepared. For each of them there was at least two channels (telephone and telegraph). Wire communications over all basic links was planned from each ZKP. In the zone of the front's defense, three communications axes were built and these were interconnected by four lateral lines. The command post of the front had special lines for contacting the airfields and reserve formations.

For each month the signals headquarters of the front worked out plans for the construction and repairing of the permanent overhead lines in its zone. In the aim of increasing the capacity of the repaired lines, additional wires were hung on them. During the period from April through July 1943, the signal troops of the front built around 17,000 km of new line, they restored and rebuilt 1,000 km of existing lines, they hung up to 7,500 km and repaired over 2,000 km of wire. The total depth of the wire communications network reached 150 km.<sup>13</sup>

In the zone of the front, many auxiliary communications centers (VUS) and monitoring-testing posts (KIP) were built and these were located to the entire depth of the front's operational configuration. Already by July 1943, 6 VUS and 35 KIP had been built at the points of the intersecting and splitting of the wires.<sup>14</sup>

The creation of a system of auxiliary VUS and KIP made it possible to rapidly establish wire communication with the formations and field forces which were part of the front as well as with the moving of the control posts in the course of the defensive engagement.

The VUS and KIP were ordinarily beyond the range of enemy artillery and aviation. Particular attention was given to their engineer equipping. Emergency crews from a squad to a platoon strong were established at the most crucial VUS and KIP. These were provided with the necessary communications equipment, tools and transport. The distance between the KIP averaged 30-40 km and between the monitoring telephone posts 8-12 km.

The measures to develop and prepare the wire communications network provided the command and staff of the Voronezh Front with constant and reliable communications in the most complicated combat situation. A significant contribution to preparing the communications network was made by the deputy signals chief of the front, Col V. V. Zvenigorodskiy.

There was the difficult task of creating a communications network in the zone of the Steppe District (chief of the signal troops, Col B. T. Soldatenkov, from June 1943, Maj Gen Sig Trps N. S. Matveyev). It was essential first of all to provide dependable communications of the district staff with the staffs of the armies and corps comprising it and for each of these staffs with the General Staff. The situation was complicated by the fact that the state communications network in this area had been little developed and the use of radio communications was categorically prohibited. For carrying out this task, major reserves from the Main Signals Directorate of the Soviet Army, military reconstruction battalions of the People's Commissariat of Communications were sent to the assembly area of the district troops and in addition the district and army units, local communications personnel and equipment were employed. These expanded the local communications centers, they equipped centers at the control posts and built communications lines. During the period of the concentration and deployment of the Steppe District the USON played a major role in ensuring troop control.

The radio communications of the Central and Voronezh Fronts was planned on the basis of the Directive of the Main Signals Directorate of the Soviet Army which

clearly outlined the communications procedures with the General Staff, the use of frequencies and call signs. Instructions were given also on other questions. In the Central Front, radio communications were provided both from the command post and from the auxiliary control post and on the Voronezh Front from the second echelon of the field headquarters and the basic alternate command post. A reserve of radio equipment was established for ensuring communication from the alternate command post of the Central Front. Each front had radio contact with the General Staff both over the audio channels and by printing.

In the Central Front, radio communications (see the diagram) with the armies was maintained over the links. This was also the case on the Voronezh Front. In addition, both fronts had radio contact with the subordinate formations and field forces over the radio networks using the Sever radios (communications via an intermediary). On the Central Front, a radio network of reserves was organized and this included the radios of the reserve formations as well as the radio network of the fortified areas.

Coordinating radio communications between the Central, Voronezh and other adjacent fronts was planned for the radio networks of the General Staff. Radio contact between the flank armies of adjacent fronts was planned over a coordinating radio network of the General Staff which was specially organized for this purpose.

Communication between the field forces and formations of the fronts was organized over two coordinating radio networks. One network included the radios of the armies on the defensive in the sector of the expected enemy main thrust while the second included the remaining all-arms and air armies.

Communication between the ground troops and aviation was provided over the fronts' coordinating radio networks which included the radios of the staffs of the air and all-arms armies. In addition, there was provision to send out air representatives to the all-arms armies and rifle divisions. In the fronts radio communication for warning about the air enemy and rear communications were well organized.

In the course of the defensive operation, wire communications was the basic means of communications in all command elements. The great work carried out by the signal troops during the preparatory period ensured dependable wire communications and this provided an opportunity for all levels of commanders to have firm, flexible and continuous control of the troops under extraordinarily complex conditions. The created communications system made it possible to effectively maneuver the telegraph wires and telephone channels and to quickly create bypass links to each of the subordinate formations and field forces.

Communications played an important role in ensuring artillery fire control. In conventional artillery wire communications was the basic means of communications while radio was this in rocket artillery. Radio was the chief means which provided control over the armored and mechanized troops. The commanders of the tank armies, the tank and mechanized corps had medium-power radios (RSB) which were installed on the KV and T-34 tanks. This made it possible for them to maintain stable contact with the senior staffs while in the battle formations of their troops.

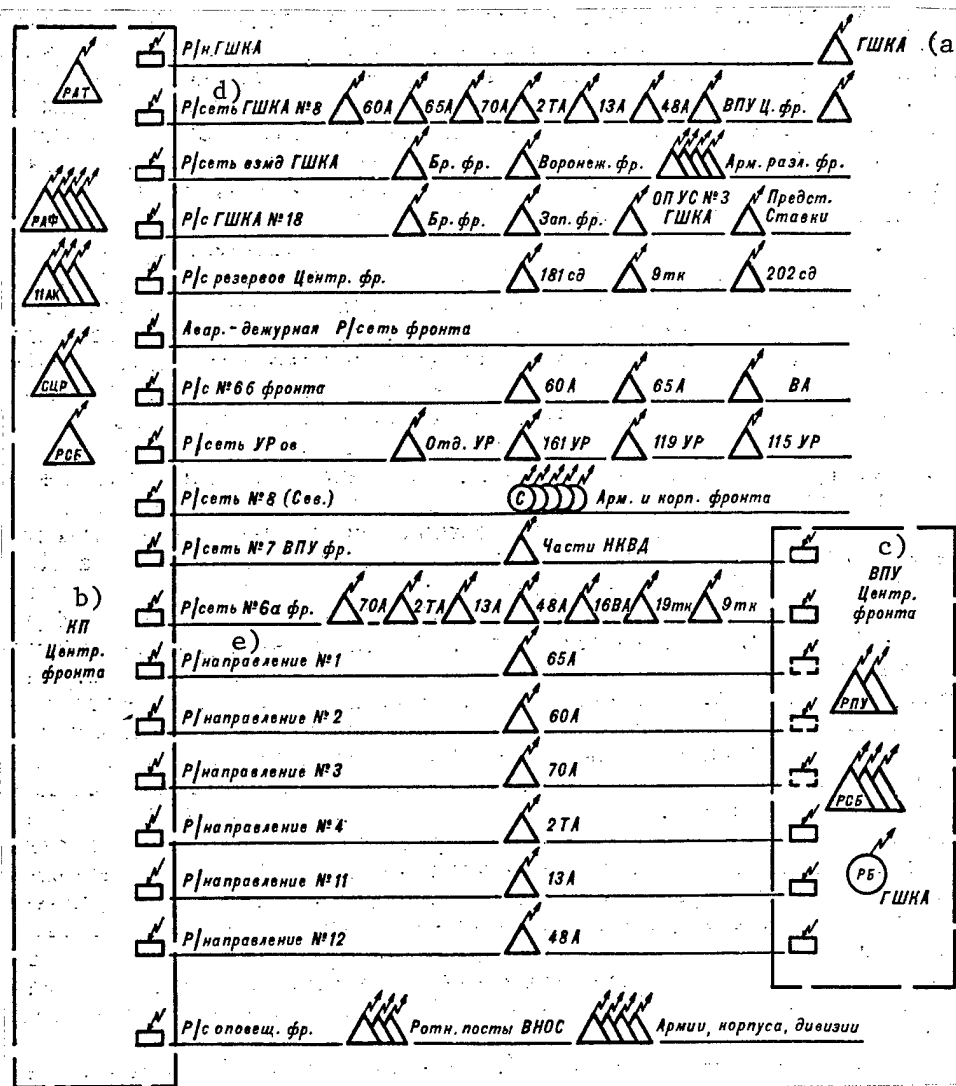


Diagram of Radio Communications for the Central Front  
by the Start of the Battle of Kursk

Key: a--General Staff of the Red Army; b--Command post of Central Front; c--Auxiliary control post of Central Front; d--Radio network; e--Radio link

During the counteroffensive the signal troops had to provide communications under exceptionally difficult conditions. For example, in the 13th Army (signals chief, Col I. F. Akhremenko) the command post moved seven times in the course of the operation, however wire communications operated dependably. This was explained by the fact that all the resources of the communications centers were divided into three positions: two of them were employed for ensuring communications from the command and auxiliary control posts while the third was used to provide communications during the moving of the control posts. Communications operated well during the period of the counteroffensive in the 5th Guards Army (signals chief, Maj Gen Sig Trps I. F. Ivanov) and in other armies.

Communications was less dependable in the tactical command element. The reason for this is that in April 1943 the separate signals battalions of the rifle divisions were turned into separate signals companies the capabilities of which did not always make it possible to ensure flexible and continuous troop control.<sup>15</sup>

In the course of the Kursk Battle, certain organizational changes had to be introduced in the signal troops. Thus, in the aim of improving control over the armored and mechanized troops and artillery, signals companies were organized for the commanders of the armored and mechanized troops and control batteries for the artillery commanders in the all-arms armies. New radio networks also appeared. For controlling aviation over the battlefield, at the command posts of the all-arms commanders special guidance radio networks were organized. Separate rear communications networks were set up in the aim of directing the activities of the rear services in the fronts and armies.

The signal troops of the fronts, armies, corps and divisions involved in the battle on the Kursk Salient invested colossal labor to achieving victory over the enemy. Their unnoticed but intense and risky work, often carried out under enemy fire, ensured dependable troop control. The signal troops showed high military skill, valor and mass heroism. Thousands of them received governmental decorations, while Sgt S. P. Zorin, Pvts V. N. Bantsekin, V. P. Ponomarev, V. A. Yatsenevich and others received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 71, inv. 12178, file 119, sheets 1-2.
- <sup>2</sup> "Istoriya razvitiya voysk svyazi" [History of the Development of the Signal Troops], Voenizdat, 1980, p 163.
- <sup>3</sup> TsAMO, folio 71, inv. 12173, file 130, sheets 26-36.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., file 385, sheet 117.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., inv. 12178, file 131, sheets 240-329.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., file 302, sheet 109.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., sheet 103.
- <sup>8</sup> "Istoriya razvitiya voysk....," p 164.
- <sup>9</sup> I. T. Peresypkin, "Svyaz' v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne" [Communications in the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Nauka, 1973, p 151.
- <sup>10</sup> TsAMO, folio 71, inv. 12171, file 100, sheet 127.
- <sup>11</sup> "Kurskaya bitva" [The Kursk Battle], Moscow, Nauka, 1970, p 253.

<sup>12</sup> TsAMO, folio 226, inv. 347, file 12, sheets 269-270.

<sup>13</sup> I. T. Peresypkin, op. cit., p 154.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 4, 1981, pp 23, 25.

<sup>16</sup> "Svyazisty--Geroi Sovetskogo Soyuza" [Signal Troops--Heroes of the Soviet Union], Book 1, Leningrad, 1982, Izd. Voenno-istoricheskogo muzeya artillerii, inzhenernykh voysk i voysk svyazi, pp 305-307.

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## LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS, IMPROVEMENTS IN KURSK BATTLE EXAMINED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 83 (signed to press 1 Jul 83) pp 43-49

[Article by Doctor of Military Sciences, Professor, Maj Gen N. Malyugin: "Particular Features in Rear Troop Support from the Experience of the Kursk Battle"]

[Text] In the course of the preparations for the Kursk Battle, the Soviet Command was able to carry out a number of major measures to organize the rear services support for the troops of the fronts. By mid-1943, the capacity of the troops had been increased for transporting materiel and for transport support, for providing medical aid to sick and wounded and for evacuating them, as well as for repairing equipment and weapons. By this time, the creation of the command bodies for operational and troop rear services had been completed.

The necessity of the troops moving from the defensive to the offensive without large operational pauses, the diverse means of conducting combat operations, the large amount of weapons, combat equipment and personnel involved in the Battle of Kursk as well as the decisiveness of the goals of the opposing sides demanded from the Soviet Command and the rear services bodies of all levels the creation and maintaining of a stable system of rear services support for the troops from the battalion level up to the front. In the troops, major organizational and technical measures were worked out to prepare the rear services as a whole and particularly for preparing the lines of communications and transport, creating supplies of materiels, their correct echeloning and the maneuvering of supplies, transport and the rear units.

Particular attention was paid to the centralized use of the available rear support resources, to the correct placement and movement of the rear units and facilities of all rear elements, to the organizing of dependable control of the rear and to the maintaining of close cooperation of the rear bodies with the all-arms staffs, the chiefs of the branches of troops and services as well as the local party and soviet bodies.

By the time the Kursk Salient had formed, a large portion of the rear units and facilities of the fronts and certain armies was 400-600 km from the supported troops. The rear services of the Central Front were in the most difficult as this front had been organized on the basis of the Don Front. On 1 April 1943, only the rear headquarters bodies had arrived in the Kursk area from the Don



Front. The basic forces of the front rear services remained in the regions of Stalingrad, Kamyshin, Engels, Rananburg or were on the move.

The operation of the rear services for the Central Front was influenced by the fact that up until 18 July 1943 the troops of the Steppe District (Front) were based in its rear zone and the rear units and facilities of this district in many instances were located on rail sections assigned to the Central Front. Moreover, the network of railroads and highways in the zone of the front did not satisfy the needs of the troops while the exposed terrain impeded the concealing and camouflaging of the rear units and facilities, the equipment and materiel.

Due to the fact that the line of the forward edge was arc-shaped, the total depth of the rear areas of the fronts varied from 150 km (the Bryansk Front) to 220-250 km (the Central and Voronezh Fronts). The depth of the army rear areas was from 80 to 200 km. This was basically determined depending upon the configuration of the lateral railroad network. The rail network was most developed in the zone of the Bryansk Front. This was comprised of four rail sections with a total length of around 1,350 km. Their capacity was up to 80 pairs of trains a day. There were fewer railroads in the zone of the Central and Voronezh Fronts. Directly in the Kursk Salient there was just one main line running toward the front, the Kastornoye--Kursk with a capacity of 12-18 pairs of trains a day. Over it freight was transported to the six armies of the Central Front and the armies of the Voronezh.

The left wing of the Western Front was based on the rail section of Tikhonova Pustyn--Sukhinichi--Duminichi, and the two left-flank armies on this front together with the troops of the Bryansk Front used the rail sections of Tula--Kozelsk and Gorbachevo--Kozelsk. The Bryansk Front was assigned five rail sections: Serpukhov--Tula; Skopin--Uzlovaya--Tula--Kozelsk; Tula--Gorbachevo; Rananburg--Volovo--Gorbachevo--Kozelsk; Ozherelye--Uzlovaya--Volovo--Yefremov. Tula and Uzlovaya were the front regulating stations.

The Central Front had six rail sections: Gryazi--Yelets--Verkhovye; Kastornoye--Marmyzi--Kursk; Yefremov--Yelets--Kastornoye; Kursk--Ponyri; Kursk--Lgov; Verkhovye--Livny--Marmyzi. Yelets, Kastornoye and Kursk were the regulating stations. The Voronezh Front did not have its own rail lines and along with the Central Front used the rail section of Kastornoye--Kursk and on which prior to 26 July 1943 it was assigned three trains a day and from 26 through 31 July, ten trains a day. The Steppe Front was based on the rail line of Liski--Valuyki--Staryy Oskol with regulating stations in Otorzhka and Liski.

For improving the rail basing of the troops in the Central and Voronezh Fronts, Hq SHC on 8 June 1943 adopted a decision to build a new rail section of Staryy Oskol--Rzhava which would be 95 km long and connect the two lateral lines of Kursk--Belgorod and Kastornoye--Valuyki. With the active participation of the local population, the rail troops of the Voronezh Front very quickly (in 32 days) built this important rail section. It was open to traffic on 17 July 1943.

Under the conditions of the intentional going over of the troops to the defensive and their readiness for a counteroffensive the need arose to bring the

rear units and facilities of the front and army level closer to the supported troops. In a majority of instances the front dumps were 100-250 km away from the forward edge while the army ones were 40-100 km (the Central and Voronezh Fronts) and 100-150 km (Bryansk Front); the distance of their sections reached 30-40 km. The divisional dumps were 10-20 km from the forward edge. Considering the need to disperse the supplies under the conditions of the open terrain and to bring them closer to the troops in the aim of shortening the time and the amount of work for delivery during the period of intense combat operations, certain dumps (dump sections) of the fronts were located in the army rear areas close to the divisional rear units.

Thus, even during the preparatory period of the Kursk Battle, there was a tendency to reduce the rear areas and bring the rear units and facilities as close as possible to the troops, without disrupting the stability of the entire rear support system. This trend which arose and was developed under the specific conditions of the war subsequently became the dominant one and was reinforced in the guidance documents. A portion of the resources of the front rear was located at the same distance from the troops as the army rear and in a number of instances in front of it.

The bringing of the front rear services closer to the troops was risky, as in the event that the enemy drove deeply into our defenses, they could come under its attack. However, such a risk was justified by the fact that in the course of the defensive engagement the front's troops in a short period of time could be continuously supplied with the basic types of materiel. Such a positioning of a portion of the resources of the front rear services was advisable. With the going over of the troops of the fronts to the counteroffensive, they would not have to be moved to new areas.

In preparing the defenses of the Kursk Salient, great attention was paid to organizing road support. In a number of important sectors of the Central and Voronezh Fronts, large amounts of road construction were carried out. The roads were graded and surfaced, new bridges were built and existing ones reinforced, for example, on the roads of Yefremov--Novosil, Yelets--Livny--Fatezh, Staryy Oskol--Oboyan.

The road units of the fronts and armies established supplies of building materials, bridge elements, road signs and indicators. In the road units of the fronts, mobile groups and non-T/O road reconnaissance teams were organized. A portion of the road troops was moved ahead of time closer to the troops. All of this made it possible for the fronts in the course of the counteroffensive to quickly bring the front and army military roads up behind the troops and provide the transporting of priority freight over them.

As a result of the work done, each front was provided with three or four front military roads the capacity of which was designed to ensure the bringing up and maneuvering of large troop groupings and rear services, delivery and evacuation. The total list of the road network in the fronts was 500-600 km. On the Voronezh Front, it was more with 920 km.

The first echelon armies of all the fronts had two or three military roads with an average length of 60-95 km each connecting the army depots and their sections as well as the railhead with the divisional dumps.

During the preparatory period and in the course of the Battle of Kursk, a major role was played by the military roads of the Center's rear: Moscow--Plavsk--Chern; Moscow--Yefremov--Rossosh. In July 1943, the intensity of traffic over the Moscow--Rossosh road reached 5,000 motor vehicles a day.<sup>1</sup>

Logistical support. When, after the conclusion of the winter campaign of 1942-1943 the Soviet troops went over to the defensive at Kursk, their supply with materiel, particularly fuel, was low. Moreover, the conducting of combat operations to repel the air enemy, the satisfying of the apparent needs of the large troop forces defending the Kursk Salient and the construction of defensive lines each day necessitated a comparatively high consumption of aviation and antiaircraft ammunition, aviation fuel and gasoline, building materials and engineer equipment. In line with this, the rear bodies were confronted with the most important task of accumulating supplies making it possible to ensure the uninterrupted supplying of the troops both in repelling the enemy offensive and in going over to the counteroffensive. In April-June, major organizational and technical measures were carried out on the fronts to create supplies of materiel, to echelon these supplies, to conceal them and to use them economically. First of all, supplies were established in the first echelon regiments and divisions. A portion of the ammunition supplies was concentrated at the artillery firing positions.

The supply of the fronts with materiel, particularly ammunition, was uneven by the start of the Battle of Kursk. In planning the ammunition supply for the troops, the artillery supply service proceeded from the decisions of the front military councils according to which a large portion of the ammunition (60-80 percent) was to be in the troops and the remainder (20-40 percent) at the army and front dumps.<sup>2</sup> The armies and divisions fighting in the sectors of the probable main enemy thrust were to have increased supplies of all types of ammunition, some 3-5 units of fire, and in the auxiliary sectors, 1.5-2 units of fire. In order to bring the ammunition closer to the troops, one or two sections were moved up from the front and army dumps to the field. This facilitated the delivery of ammunition during the period of conducting intense combat operations.

During the period of the defensive engagement, the delivery of ammunition from the central dumps and depots was increased. Antitank shells were allocated to the fronts, according to a decision of Hq SHC, in amounts which even surpassed their request. Basic attention was paid to continuous supply for the armies on the defensive in the sectors of the enemy assault groupings, as they consumed much ammunition. For example, the consumption of ammunition in the 13th Army was 73 percent of its total consumption by all the troops of the Central Front.

The rapid change in the situation forced the artillery supply bodies of the Center and fronts to redirect transport en route and to load ammunition onto the transport of the units directly from the railroad cars. Frequently it was necessary to maneuver the supplies of the formations or even shift them from one section to another. The rear services of the Center sometimes helped the

fronts with motor transport. Thus, in July-August 1943, the Bryansk Front received two motor vehicle battalions as reinforcements, the Voronezh Front received five while the Steppe Front received two.

During the period from 5 July through 23 August 1943, the troops of the Bryansk, Central, Voronezh and Steppe Fronts consumed 9,200 carloads of ammunition, including 970 for small arms, 8,230 carloads of shells and mortar shells.<sup>3</sup> Neither before the Kursk Battle nor after it did the history of the Great Patriotic War know such consumption of ammunition in such a short period of time.

After the end of the winter campaign of 1942-1943, fuel supplies in the troops as an average declined to 0.5 fuelings. The going over of the fronts to the defensive in the spring of 1943 made it possible to somewhat reduce fuel consumption and this created prerequisites for stockpiling its supplies for the forthcoming operations. In order to increase the supplies in the operational army, prior to the start of the Kursk Battle, the consumption limits were reduced for the troops and the amount of fuel supplies was increased for the fronts on the defensive in the Kursk Salient. Due to the measures taken, the actual amounts of the supplies of fuel and lubricants in the fronts was 15 fuelings for diesel fuel and 13 fuelings for aviation gasoline.<sup>4</sup> The Central Front had 3.4 fuelings of motor gasoline and the Voronezh Front had 5.8. Of these a total of around 0.5 fueling was available at the front dumps and this, of course, created definite difficulties in supplying the troops with fuel. Moreover, on the Voronezh Front there was not enough capacity for fuel storage and its supplies had to be kept beyond the front rear area.

Fuel supply for the troops was complicated during the period of the Kursk Battle by the heavy load factor on the railroads over which the operational shipments had to be made and by the poor state of the dirt roads. Difficulties also occurred due to the fact that enemy aviation during the summer of 1943 knocked out the Saratov cracking plant and also a portion of the state fuel reserves at depots close to Saratov. For continuously providing the troops with fuel, the central supply bodies carried out a number of measures to reallocate the fuel between the departments, they maneuvered the fuel supplies between the fronts and organized the delivery of the most essential grades of fuel by the motor transport of the Center from the dumps and depots of the fuel supply directorate. All of this helped to promptly provide the troops of the fronts with the necessary fuel supplies.

By the start of the offensive engagement on the Kursk Salient, the food supply for the fronts had been brought up to an average of 15-20 daily rations (with the exception of sugar for which there were 5-7 daily rations in the troops). The food supplies on the fronts, in addition to centralized deliveries according to plans of the Center, were replenished by procurement from local resources, particularly grain, groats, meat and fresh vegetables. For example, we should note the experience of the Central Front in the procurement and mass driving of livestock from Saratov, Tambov, Voronezh and Penza Oblasts over a distance of 600-900 and more kilometers. The front's military council, in order to aid the procurement organizations, assigned more than 700 soldiers and officers. The livestock driving zones were designated ahead of time, dispatcher and feed points were prepared and veterinary services organized. This supplied the front with around 6,000 tons of meat in June-July 1943 and this covered the

current demand and made it possible to create the necessary reserves of meat products.<sup>5</sup>

During the preparatory period of the Kursk Battle, they tested out the new procedure introduced in the Soviet Army for the delivery of materiel. This had arisen in the Battle of Stalingrad. Its essence was that responsibility for the delivery of all materiel to subordinate troops, regardless of the affiliation of the employed transport, was put fully on the senior rear chief. This sharply improved the work of all types of transport, it accelerated the arrival of the freight in the units and formations and told positively on the logistical support for the troops.

In the operation of the rear services of the fronts in 1943, the tendency for an increased role played by motor transport in the delivery of materiel continued to become evermore apparent. Thus, during the period of the Kursk Battle, the average daily delivery of materiel to the fronts by motor transport reached 23,000 tons.<sup>6</sup> This was 2-fold more than in the combat operations at Moscow and Stalingrad. The average distance for the delivery of materiel by motor transport during the defensive engagement and in the course of the counteroffensive was relatively short, some 90-150 km, and along with the well-prepared network of military roads this contributed to the successful carrying out of the tasks of promptly transporting the necessary freight.

The experience of the Stalingrad Battle was widely employed in the medical support for the troops. The resources of the medical service began to be more boldly maneuvered. The deployment of the first echelons of the front hospital bases in the army rear areas created conditions for the more effective use of the army medical facilities. The strengthening of the front and army level of the medical service provided better conditions for the treating of sick and wounded. Their evacuation beyond the front rear area was shortened. Thus, in July-August 1943, the Bryansk, Central, Voronezh and Steppe Fronts evacuated 22.9 percent of the wounded and 8.9 percent of the sick, while in the course of the Stalingrad Battle (July 1942-January 1943), out of the total number of medical casualties, 53.8 percent of the wounded and 23.6 percent of the sick were evacuated to the deep rear.

Reducing the evacuation of the sick and wounded beyond the front rear area not only reduced the demand for evacuation shipments but also contributed to their rapid return to service, particularly to their own units. This was of important significance for their maintaining the battleworthiness of the troops and indoctrinating the personnel in combat traditions.

In preparing for the counteroffensive, the rear services of the fronts and armies in a short period of time carried out a great deal of work to create the necessary supplies of the basic types of materiel in the troops and at the dumps. Due to the fact that the Central Front did not have time to prepare the rear services for the counteroffensive, the stockpiling of supplies to replace expended ones was carried out in the troops, at the army and front dumps in the course of the offensive. This created stress in the operation of rail and motor transport in promptly delivering materiel from the front dumps to the army ones and from these to the troops.

In the course of the counteroffensive, the depth of the army rear areas reached 150-200 km and for the fronts 400-500 km. Proceeding from the existing situation, the army front was moved once or twice. The Bryansk, Voronezh and Central Fronts partially moved their rear units and facilities. As for the rear of the Steppe Front, it was moved almost completely to new areas.

Logistical support for the troops in the course of the counteroffensive was carried out, as a rule, continuously. The total consumption of ammunition and fuel was around 200,000 tons. Both in preparing for the counteroffensive and in the course of it, on all the fronts great attention was paid to creating reserves for the army and front rear. In critical moments, the chief of the rear services of a front (army) used these reserves in carrying out suddenly arising tasks.

The ammunition, fuel, food and military technical supplies were delivered to the troops basically by motor and rail transport. The road troops of the fronts and armies were able to promptly rebuild the military roads and maintain them in proper order. However, the efficient operation of motor transport sometimes was sharply reduced due to the long stoppages of the motor columns in loading and unloading and because of the loss of time looking for the consumers (recipients) who had changed their location as a result of an abrupt change in the situation.

By mid-1943, major measures had been carried out to improve the rear command bodies at the center, on the fronts and in the armies. This made it possible to carry out the complex tasks of rear support for the troops in a more effective and organized manner.

On the operational level of the rear, measures were taken to improve the supply of communications equipment to the rear command bodies. Thus, the rear staffs of the fronts received a separate signals company and a separate telephone construction company. In the armies the chief of the army rear had available a signals company. The rear chiefs of the fronts received an air liaison flight (three PO-2 aircraft). As a result, the rear control bodies became more closely linked to the all-arms staffs, the subordinate and cooperating services, the rear units and facilities.

On the rear staffs of the fronts and armies, independent communications for the control of the rear services was established, communications centers were built although their equipping with communications remained insufficient and they particularly lacked powerful radios. For this reason telephone communications was more frequently used as well as communications by messenger with airplanes, motor vehicles and motor cycles. The practice of assigning operational groups of the rear staffs to the various sectors became widespread.

Thus, the rear services of the fronts and armies involved in the Kursk Battle carried out a large amount of work in the area of logistical, transport, medical and other types of support and services for the troops. Over the period of the Kursk Battle, the troops of the Central, Voronezh, Steppe, Bryansk, Southwestern and the left wing of the Western Front received by rail some 141,354 carloads of ammunition, fuel, food and other materiel from the central dumps and depots. Air transport to just the Central Front delivered 1,828 tons of various supply

cargo.<sup>7</sup> The integrated use of all types of transport (rail, motor, air and cart) ensured the prompt delivery of everything necessary to the troops as well as the evacuation of sick and wounded, damaged equipment and weapons.

Both on the defensive and in the counteroffensive, the rear bodies maneuvered the supplies of materiel, transport, medical and repair units and facilities and made wide use of local and captured supplies in the interests of supplying the troops. All of this ultimately made it possible to maintain their battle-worthiness on a high level.

The successful carrying out of the tasks of rear support was largely aided by the skillfully organized party political work. The political sections and party organizations of the rear units and facilities showed great concern for the prompt supplying of the troops with the materiel necessary for combat.

For heroic military and labor feats, thousands of men from the rear units and facilities were awarded orders and medals.

The experience acquired in the Kursk Battle by the rear services of the fronts, armies, corps and divisions has not lost its importance today. Regardless of the changes in the technical equipping of the troops and in the nature of combat and an operation, many of its concepts can be successfully employed in organizing rear support for the troops under present-day conditions.

#### FOOTNOTES

1 TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 67, inv. 264796, file 118, sheet 71.

2 "Istoriya tyla" [History of the Rear Services], Leningrad, Izd. Voennoy akademii tyla i transporta, 1974, p 110.

3 TsAMO, folio 81, inv. 174965, file 85, sheet 57.

4 M. I. Kormilitsin, "Sluzhbe snabzheniya goryuchim v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945 gg." [The Fuel Supply Service in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Voenizdat, 1960, p 36.

5 TsAMO, folio 67, inv. 2279, file 163, sheet 14.

6 "Tyl Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945 gg." [The Rear Services of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Voenizdat, 1977, p 269.

7 "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, Voenizdat, 1976, p 183.

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## ROLE OF PARTY POLITICAL WORK IN KURSK BATTLE REVIEWED

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[Article by Candidate of Historical Sciences, Col (Res) A. Volkov: "Certain Questions of Party Political Work in the Troops of the Voronezh Front During the Period of the Kursk Battle"]

[Text] The Battle of Kursk has inscribed many vivid pages in the chronicle of the Great Patriotic War. Party political work embodying Leninist principles, the instructions of the Communist Party and the experience of previous operations played an important role in successfully carrying it out. One of the particular features of this work in the organization and execution was that it was carried out under the condition of the intentional going over of the Soviet troops to the defensive and the long periods of its preparation with the subsequent going over to a counteroffensive without an operational pause.

The Military Council of the Voronezh Front demanded that the commanders, political bodies and party-political apparatus of the units prepare the troops for the forthcoming combat operations. The political directorate of the front (chief, Maj Gen S. S. Shatilov), proceeding from the overall task of grinding down and bleeding white the enemy during the active defensive battles and then going over to the counteroffensive and defeating the enemy, worked out a plan for party political measures. It envisaged the organizing of political indoctrination for the personnel, the creation of viable party and Komsomol organizations in all subunits, the training of the party and Komsomol activists and so forth. In the plan an important place was given over to the questions of indoctrinating the men in steadfastness on the defensive and decisiveness of actions on the offensive.

In carrying out the instructions of V. I. Lenin that "where party work in the troops is carried out most thoughtfully...there there is no laxness in the army, its order and spirit are better and there are more victories,"<sup>1</sup> the commanders and political workers, the party and Komsomol organizations carried out party political work on a differentiated basis.

The ideological and political training for officers was based on a study of the decisions of the party Central Committee and the Soviet government, the directives and instructions of Hq SHC, the Main Political Directorate of the RKKA



[Worker-Peasant Red Army], the orders of the commanders and the decisions of the front military council. According to the subjects worked out by the Main Political Directorate in April-June political exercises were to be conducted regularly for the personnel. Additional subjects, in accord with the specific tasks, were set by the front political directorate, by the political sections of the armies, corps, divisions and brigades.

In party political work an important place was held by indoctrinating the new arrivals. A significant portion of them had been called up from oblasts and rayons which for around 2 years had been on occupied territory and naturally had been exposed to Nazi propaganda. Work with this category of the men started in the reserve regiments where they regularly held political information sessions, talks, reports, lectures and the reading of newspapers as well as the showing of films. It was continued when these troops arrived in the combat units and subunits. Speaking to the new recruits were the commanders, the political workers, party and Komsomol activists and unit veterans who had distinguished themselves in previous battles. They acquainted the new men with the combat traditions of the army collectives, they told about the feats of fellow servicemen, they urged them to be their equals, they shared experience and gave practical advice.

The front political directorate worked out a plan for conducting political exercises with the personnel arriving as reinforcements. It envisaged the following subjects: "The VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)], the Organizer and Inspirer of the Victories of the Soviet People Over Nazi Germany," "The Sources of Our Victories Over the Nazi Invaders," "From the Rear to the Front!" and others. For the new recruits pamphlets, leaflets and posters were published. One of the publications of the political directorate stated: "Comrade soldiers: you are witnesses of the monstrous atrocities and violence of the Nazi butchers. Many of you yourselves have experienced all the terrors of the Nazi yoke.... Thus direct all the force...of the weapons at the heads of the despicable bandits! Take vengeance on them unmercifully. Hit them without stopping. Pour all the strength of your hate into battle. Take vengeance for all the torture and suffering of our wives, mothers and children."<sup>2</sup>

Extensive work to shape up the new recruits was carried out, for example, in the 6th Guards Army (military council member, Maj Gen P. I. Kraynov, chief of the political section, Col L. I. Sokolov). The best trained commanders, political workers and propagandists were assigned for their instruction and indoctrination. In using the experience of the Stalingrad battles, the combat traditions of the army's formations and units, they closely linked political work with the tasks being carried out for the engineer organization of the terrain and instilled in the men love for the motherland and hate for the Nazi invaders. There was much that was of interest and instructive in indoctrinating this category of personnel in the other field forces and formations of the front.

For the offensive, the Nazi Command had concentrated a large number of tank and mechanized formations assuming that they would play the role of not only a mighty assault force but would also have a strong moral impact on the Soviet soldiers. Under these conditions, it was essential to teach the personnel to combat the new enemy equipment and to shatter the myth of its invincibility. The front military council in its directive demanded that the commanders

conduct at least four exercises on studying the methods of destroying the Nazi tanks and self-propelled mounts in all subunits, including the rear ones, while the political sections of the armies, corps and fronts had to organize their party political support and the putting out of visual agitation.

Tank destroyer groups were organized in the subunits. The party and Komsomol organizations, the party political-apparatus of the units and the political bodies took an active part in their training and indoctrination. At tank destroyer rallies, from the regimental level to the army, the political workers were the initiators of generalizing the experience of the best artillery troops, armored troops, tank troops and grenade launchers. All that was new and advanced in combating the enemy was adopted.

Much attention was paid to propagandizing the methods of combating enemy tanks in the army press. In July on the Voronezh Front around 60 divisional and corps papers and up to 10 army ones were being published.<sup>3</sup> Their pages took up the experience of the previous battles, they told about the might of our weapons and the feats of the tank destroyers and published articles by soldiers, sergeants and officers who had distinguished themselves in the course of the Stalingrad Battle. Many of them had to their score two or more destroyed enemy tanks or assault guns.

In the units and formations of the front extensive work was carried out with the command personnel in training it in the practices of party political work. The officers were given lectures and reports on the question of troop training and indoctrination. With the commanders of the battalions, companies and platoons seminars were held on the forms and methods of working with the personnel on the defensive and offensive.

Effective work was carried out to train the party and Komsomol activists and to create a reserve of party and Komsomol organizers. The ranks of agitators were filled out with politically mature and well-regarded soldiers who had already proven themselves in battle. In each division there were 400-450 of them.<sup>4</sup>

The ideological level of the soldiers, sergeants and officers rose. This can be seen from the increasing flow of applications to be admitted to the party and Komsomol. In each rifle company and artillery battery, viable party organizations were created consisting of 10-12 and more communists.<sup>5</sup> Along with the commanders and political workers they indoctrinated the men.

At the end of May, a conference was held for the chiefs of the political sections. It examined the questions of party political work to ensure the carrying out of the tasks confronting the troops of the front and there was a thorough discussion of the Leninist demand: "...See to political work" and "Don't let up on political work."<sup>6</sup> It was recommended that the political bodies, the party and Komsomol organizations more widely developed work in readying the personnel for the forthcoming battles and to indoctrinate the men in vigilance and hate for the Nazi invaders.

Among the particular features of party political work one must also put the fact that it was carried out in accord with the Decree of the VKP(b) Central Committee of 24 May 1943 on reorganizing the structure of the party and Komsomol

organizations in the Soviet Army and the decree of the State Defense Committee of 24 May 1943 on abolishing the institution of deputy company commanders (and for equal subunits) for political affairs. In battalions and equal subunits, primary party organizations were organized and instead of elected party organization secretaries they introduced the appointed party organizers of regiments, battalions and companies.

The reorganization in the party and Komsomol organizations in the battalions and companies was basically complete by 25 June. Some 1,242 new party organizations had been created in the front's troops.<sup>7</sup> The number of primary organizations, in comparison with April, had increased by 2-fold and in the company organizations by 1.7-fold.

When the time the enemy was to go over to the offensive became known, party and Komsomol meetings were held in the companies, batteries, battalions and regiments. In the resolutions adopted at them, the communists and Komsomol members vowed under any conditions to carry out the order: not a step back, to stand to death! The political section of the 90th Guards Rifle Division (chief of the political section, Lt Col A. D. Shadura) published a leaflet with an appeal in the defensive battles to fight the enemy like guardsmen and to impose their will on the enemy. Leaflets of similar content were published by other political sections of the front. They urged the decisive destruction of enemy equipment and personnel. The efforts of the army and front party political apparatus were focused on work in the units and formations operating in the sector of the assumed enemy main thrusts.

The high morale of the men was one of the factors making it possible for them to check the Nazi powerful tank thrust. In the course of fierce battles, party political work did not lessen for a minute. The Leninist ideas on flexibility, efficiency and purposefulness of this work were constantly carried out under combat conditions. But the forms and methods of it were somewhat altered. Moving to the forefront were the personal example, the party and Komsomol challenge, express leaflets on heroes of battles and so forth.

In the second stage of the battle, party political work was focused on instilling in the men a high offensive drive, the rapid capturing of important lines, initiative, boldness and resourcefulness in engagements with the enemy and the imposing of one's will on the enemy. As before, the company and equivalent subunits were the center of this. In accord with the directive of the Main Political Directorate of the RKKA of 21 July 1943,<sup>8</sup> special attention was paid to training the personnel of the reconnaissance subunits the tasks of which had become more complex in the counteroffensive. In the troops seminars for the political personnel and meetings of the party aktiv were held on the questions of organizing party political work in this stage of the battle and the most acceptable forms and methods of political influence on the personnel were determined. The ranks of the political workers, the party and Komsomol leaders and agitators were replenished from the previously created reserve. The losses of active political fighters were made up from prepared and well regarded soldiers.

The commanders of the units and formations, their deputies, the chiefs of the political bodies and staffs gave talks to the officers and sergeants arriving from the reserve and assigned to the positions of platoon commander. These

talks and lectures were on the subjects: "Indoctrinating the Men in Intrepidity, Courage and Heroism on the Offensive," "The Political Work of Commanders in Offensive Combat," "Organizing Indoctrination with the Personnel," "Daily Concern for the Needs of the Soldier--A Sacred Duty of the Commander"<sup>9</sup> and others.

The political bodies gave great attention to the training of the sergeants. Exercises, instruction sessions, reports and talks were held with this category of servicemen. For example, in the formations of the 7th Guards Army and the 1st Tank Army meetings were held for junior commanders with the agenda "The Role and Tasks of Noncommissioned Officers in Offensive Battles." The commanders of squads, teams and crews and the master sergeants of the subunits shared their experience of psychologically influencing their subordinates in the course of combat and the maintaining of high discipline, efficiency and organization.

The results of the defensive battles were summed up in the units and subunits. The commanders and political workers told about the men who had distinguished themselves as well as about the losses of the Nazi invaders. Information on the successes of the counteroffensive by the troops of the Bryansk, Central and other fronts had a great mobilizing impact.

The situation required the reinforcing of party ranks. In the course of the defensive battles, a significant number of communists had been lost in the formations. In the subunits intense work was being carried out to admit soldiers, sergeants and officers to the party. The previous number of communists, for example, in the 1st Tank Army (military council member N. K. Popel', chief of the political section A. G. Zhuravlev was reached in a comparatively short time.

The front, army and divisional newspapers played an important role in preparing the troops for the forthcoming offensive. In them more space began to be assigned to articles by combat heroes, agitators, commanders, political workers and staff officers. The newspapers propagandized the experience of the defensive battles and published advice to the tank troops, the artillery and infantry on how to act on the offensive. Articles under the heading "Combating Enemy Tanks from an Ambush," "For the Tank Destroyer" as well as articles to help the tank troops, artillery, combat engineers, machine gunner and riflemen appeared constantly in the newspapers. The political sections published instructions on various questions of personnel training, such as: "Advice to the Observer," "Advice to the Scout," "A Bold Submachine Gunner in Combat is a Peril to the Nazis" and others. Moreover, leaflets were published on MSgt Andrey Likhoshestov, Sr Sgt Ivan Zinchenko, Pvt Vdovichenko and other servicemen who had shown courage, heroism and high combat skill in combat.<sup>10</sup>

Directly before the counteroffensive, the appeal of the front military council was read. It urged the personnel, without regard for its life, to drive the Nazi invaders from the homeland and to destroy them by every means and method. Meetings were held in the primary and company party and Komsomol organizations. Each communist and Komsomol member received an assignment for the period of carrying out the immediate combat task. Many of them were assigned to erect flags on hills and the buildings of population points.

In the course of preparing for the counteroffensive, the political bodies continued to pay attention to the political support for the cooperating branches of troops. In joint meetings for the political workers of attached and supporting units and formations, measures were coordinated to support combat operations, meetings were held for the infantrymen, artillery, the tank troops, combat engineers and so forth.

The organizational and ideological-political work of the political bodies, the party and Komsomol organizations helped to raise combat morale in the personnel.

On 3 August, the troops of the front went over to the counteroffensive. In the course of it the political bodies of the front clearly set out the tasks for the political personnel, the party bodies, the party and Komsomol activists and they responded quickly to changes in the situation. Thus, during the encirclement of the Borisovka-Tomarovka grouping, the 13th Guards Rifle Division received the task of cutting off the enemy route of retreat. There was little time to carry it out. The chief of the division's political section, Col M. M. Vavilov, quickly adjusted the tasks for the deputy commanders for political affairs and for the party and Komsomol organizations in working with the personnel. Steadfastness and decisiveness on the defensive became the main things in the activities of the party and political apparatus. The formation successfully carried out the given task. All attempts by the superior enemy forces to break through the defenses were in vain.

The political bodies maintained close ties with the staffs, they were constantly up on what was happening, they effectively provided instructions to the political personnel on the changes in the situation and promptly supplied the party and Komsomol aktiv and the agitators with the necessary materials. In the subunits, units and formations they propagandized the heroism of the men, the combat successes of adjacent fronts and the efforts of the rear workers to supply the front with everything necessary. Having assembled information on the previous day during the night, the political bodies turned it over to the political apparatus of the units. In a short period of time each man knew of the outstanding soldiers, sergeants and officers as well as about the successes of his own and other fronts.

The forms and methods of agitation and propaganda were chosen in accord with the combat situation. The divisional newspaper FRONTOVİK, from the experience of the battles of 21 August, provided the following guidelines for the activists: "If conditions allow, hold a meeting, assembly or talk or read the newspaper. If this cannot be done, then have them pass along the most recent news from the fronts or provide information on courageous soldiers. If you go over to the attack, provide a patriotic slogan, commend the men ahead and with cheerful words urge the men forward!"<sup>11</sup>

Indoctrinational work with the personnel in the course of the counteroffensive was diverse. For example, meetings devoted to the liberation of cities had a strong emotional impact on the men. The orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief were read at them and the men and commanders spoke.

Leaflets and express pamphlets were widely used for indoctrinational purposes. These were published on such subjects as: "Glory to the Heroes!" "Our Heroes,"

"Know Your Heroes," "Death to the Nazi Occupiers" and "Pass It Along." One of them stated: "The courageous son of the Kazakh people, Kabyden Abdurakhmanov destroyed 20 Nazis with bayonette and grenade. Glory and honor to the hero Kabyden Abdurakhmanov! Our dream is coming true, we are driving the enemies from the motherland. For the Soviet motherland, for our people, combat friends, forward! The political section."

The showing of the atrocities of the occupiers helped to indoctrinate the men in a spirit of hate for the Nazi invaders. In the ashes of former villages and hamlets, in the ruins of cities, by the gallows and by trenches filled with the bodies of peaceful citizens, the political workers, the party and Komsomol activists urged their comrades to avenge the Nazi invaders. A feeling of sacred vengeance against the enemy burst out with particular strength after the combat veterans met with the just liberated Soviet citizens, in hearing their stories of what terrors they had to experience in being in Nazi occupied territory.

The divisional clubs put up posters urging the men and commanders to carry out a feat for the sake of the motherland.

The salvos of the Great Patriotic War have long died away. In the course of the revolution in military affairs, the technical equipping of the USSR Armed Forces has changed beyond recognition. The appearance of new weapons and of new methods of armed combat has complicated party political work. Its forms and methods have undergone changes. At the same time the creative use of the experience acquired by the commanders, the political bodies in the Kursk Battle is of permanent significance.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 39, p 56.

<sup>2</sup> "Partiyno-politicheskaya rabota v Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh silakh v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny 1941-1945" [Party Political Work in the Soviet Armed Forces During the Years of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Voenizdat, 1968, pp 274, 275.

<sup>3</sup> TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 335, inv. 5436, file 133, sheet 194.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., folio 226, inv. 52862, file 1, sheet 95.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., folio 32, inv. 11318, file 68, sheet 42.

<sup>6</sup> V. I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 50, pp 328, 348.

<sup>7</sup> "Partiyno-politicheskaya rabota...", p 278.

<sup>8</sup> TsAMO, folio 32, inv. 795436, file 52, sheets 59-60.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., folio 236, inv. 2675, file 59, sheet 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., file 5, sheet 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., file 59, sheet 18.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., sheet 13.

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## ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS ON END OF KURSK BATTLE PUBLISHED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 83 (signed to press 1 Jul 83) pp 56-64

[Materials prepared by Col O. Gurov and Lt Col V. Kovalev: "Victory in the Kursk Salient"]

[Text] As a result of the stubborn and steadfast defense by the troops of the Central and Voronezh Fronts, the attempts by the Nazi hordes to break through to the region of Kursk, to defeat our troops defending on the Kursk Salient and to "take revenge" for Stalingrad have completely collapsed.

Hq SHC, in carefully following the development of events, at the moment when a crisis occurred in the enemy offensive, issued orders for our troops to go over to a counteroffensive.

On 12 July 1943, the Orel Offensive Operation commenced under the code name "Kutuzov" (Documents 1 and 2). After a strong artillery and air softening up, the troops on the left wing of the Western Front and the basic forces of the Bryansk Front rushed the enemy. On 15 July, the field forces of the Central Front joined the counteroffensive. As a result, the enemy defenses were broken along a broad front and the Soviet troops began to successfully advance (Documents 3-5).

Hq SHC ordered a group of fronts to conduct a counteroffensive against the Belgorod-Kharkov enemy grouping. These fronts were: the Voronezh, Steppe and the right wing of the Southwestern Front. The operation commenced on 3 August (Document 6). On 5 August, Belgorod was liberated (Document 7). In the course of the battles the Soviet troops advanced 140 km and dealt a major defeat to the Nazi grouping in the region of Belgorod and Kharkov (Documents 8-13).

### Document 1

#### REPORT OF MAR SU G. K. ZHUKOV TO Hq SHC ON THE BEGINNING OF IMPLEMENTING THE "KUTUZOV" PLAN OF 12 JULY 1943

1. After 1 hour 45 minutes of artillery softening up, the troops of Vasilenko<sup>1</sup> and Markov<sup>2</sup> went over to the offensive according to the "Kutuzov" Plan.



2. The Bagranyan army has broken through the enemy defenses along a front 16 km wide and 9 km deep.

By 2000 hours of 12 July, the rifle formations had reached the line of elev. 221 (3 km to the west of Glinnaya), Krasnyy Oktyabr, Nikitskoye, the northern edge of Staritsa, Rechitsa, Slobodka.

For exploiting the breakthrough, Vasilenko committed the V Tank Corps which by 1900 hours had passed the line of Ruchya Fomina.

The Bagranyan army captured over 700 prisoners and also equipment which is being counted.

3. The Belov army broke through the enemy defenses in an area 10 km wide and 4 km deep and by 2200 hours had reached a front 1 km to the west of Karagashinka, the ravine to the southeast of Palchikovo, Krivtsovo, Fetishchevo, Lubny, Chegodayevo, having captured 120 prisoners and equipment. The XX Tank Corps by 2000 hours had been moved by Belov to the western bank of the Oka River and tomorrow, upon capturing the area of Khmelevaya, will be committed to exploit the breakthrough.

4. The Gorbatov and Kolpakchi armies broke through the enemy defensive front in an area 15 km wide and 5 km deep and by 2000 hours had reached a line of the northern edge of Izmalkovo, a half kilometer to the east of Yevtekhov, Zatishye, the eastern edge of Liski, the southwestern edge of the grove 2.5 km to the west of Orlovka, Repyevka.

In this sector, the I Tank Corps during the night of 13 July moved to the western bank of the Zusha River in the region of Ivan, Bol. Malinovets, Star. Bitkovo and with the capturing of Yevtekhov, Grachevka by the infantry tomorrow will be committed to the breakthrough with the immediate task of capturing the area of Mikhovoye.

5. Tomorrow in the morning, after a 30-minute artillery softening up, we will continue the offensive according to the "Kutuzov" Plan.

6. According to data from prisoners with whom I spoke personally, the strong reconnaissance conducted by us on the eve of the offensive fully confirmed that the forward trench was occupied by the enemy battle outposts. This provided us an opportunity to avoid the wasting of shells during the period of the artillery softening up.

The prisoner also confirmed that the method adopted in the given offensive for artillery softening up (increasing the rate of fire with the rush of the infantry into the attack and in capturing the forward defensive edge) ensured surprise of attack.

The enemy infantry, in being accustomed to having the rush by our infantry into the attack be preceded by the highest rate of fire and then the shifting of it in depth, at present also expected our routine shifting of fire in depth, was sitting in the shelters and missed the attack by our infantry, due to which we very quickly took the forward edge and have a large number of prisoners.

7. Artillery operated in an organized manner and well, and the breakthrough corps proved fully effective.

8. Enemy aviation operated against the battle formations chiefly of the advancing units of the Gorbатов and Kolpakchi armies, having made 504 sorties.

Our aviation on the Bryansk Front made 598 aircraft sorties.

Some 51 enemy aircraft were shot down in air battles and by the antiaircraft artillery of the Bryansk Front.

Yur'yev

(TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 48, inv. 5, file 29, sheets 237-240)

#### Document 2

#### COMBAT ORDER TO TROOPS OF BRYANSK FRONT TO COMPLETE BREAKTHROUGH OF ENEMY DEFENSIVE ZONE OF 12 JULY 1943

1. The units of the 3d and 63d Armies on 12 July 1943 broke through the forward enemy defensive edge and by the end of the day had reached the line:

The 3d Army--the southeastern spurs of the ravines, Log, elevs. 246.7, 230.0, Ivan, Uslan, Zatishye;

The 63d Army--the ravine to the west of Bol. Malinovets, 1 km to the east of elevs. 254.9, 248.0.

The enemy is resisting on a line of marker 227.4, Yevtekhov, Grachevka, Progress.

2. The armies of the front on 13 July 1943 are to continue to carry out the set tasks in the area of completing the breakthrough of the entire defensive zone and reaching the line: Znamenka, Suvorovo, Pobednoye, Zabrody, Arzhanoye, Sury.

3. The commander of the 3d Army is to continue the offensive, making the main thrust with the left flank in the direction of Suvorovo, Pobednoye, and, in rolling up the enemy defenses, by the end of the day to reach the line of: Znamenka, Melyn, Suvorovo, Alekseyevo, elev. 258.1, Pobednoye.

The boundary line on the left as before.

4. The commander of the 63d Army is to continue the offensive, making the main thrust with the right flank and center of the army, reaching by the end of the day, the line Zabrody, Podmaslovo, Arzhanoye, Kolganovka, Sury.

The I Tank Corps during the night of 13 July is to move to the western bank of the Zusha River and assemble in the area: Ivan, Zatishye, Bol. Malinovets, Bitkovo Station.

After the infantry has captured the line of Yevtekhov, Grachevka, the corps is to be committed to the breakthrough with the immediate task of capturing... the region of Mokhovoye. Subsequently to follow the previously set task.

5. The start of the offensive is at 0730 hours on 13 July 1943 after a half-hour softening up. The high-powered artillery from 0400 hours is to destroy the basic enemy strongpoints.

The army offensive will be supported by combat aviation according to a special plan.

6. During the night of 13 July 1943, the troops are to be made ready, the artillery (including the antiaircraft) and tanks are to be moved up and prepared for repelling possible enemy counterattacks, keeping a portion of the guns and tanks dug in in the infantry battle formations.

During the entire night, reconnaissance sweeps are to be carried out in the aim of capturing prisoners for identification purposes and establishing the enemy's defensive system.

By simultaneous actions of individual battalions and companies, the following are to be taken:

For the commander of the 3d Army--Yevtekhov, Grachevka;

For the commander of the 63d Army--Progress, Leski.

7. During the night the troops are to be supplied with ammunition, fuel, food, the troop rear services are to be put in order, all wounded are to be evacuated, corpses are to be buried and all damaged materiel removed from the battlefield.

8. Receipt is to be confirmed.

Commander of Bryansk Front  
Col Gen Popov

Military Council Member of Front  
Lt Gen Mekhlis

Deputy Chief of Staff of Front  
Maj Gen Antropov

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 48, inv. 5, file 29, sheets 248-250)

#### Document 3

OPERATIONAL DIRECTIVE FROM COMMANDER OF CENTRAL FRONT  
TO COMMANDERS OF 13th, 70th AND 2d TANK ARMIES AND 16th AIR ARMY  
ON BREAKING THROUGH ENEMY DEFENSES IN THE AREA OF VERKH. TAGINO--TROSNA  
OF 18 JULY 1943

1. The routed enemy units of the 216th, 78th, 86th and 292d Infantry Divisions, the 10th Motorized Division, the 4th Tank Division, the 304th Motorized Regiment (2d Tank Regiment), the 31st, 7th and 258th Infantry Divisions, the 8th,

13th and 9th Chasseur Battalions have been thrown back by our troops in a northerly direction and have gone over to the defensive in their former positions, having a forward edge of the main battlefield on the line: Krasn. Slobodka, Saburovo, Krivtsovo, Glazunovo, Arkhangel'skoye, Nov. Khutor (Senkovskiye elevs.), Verkh. Tagino, elev. 257.3 (1 km to the south of Voronets), the southern edge of the forest (1 km to the south of Morozikha), elev. 254.5 (3 km to the southeast of Trosna), Lavrovo.

2. The troops of the 13th and 70th Armies and 2d Tank Army, with air support from the 16th Air Army, on the morning of 19 July 1943 are to go over to the offensive with the task of breaking through the enemy defensive front in the section: Verkh. Tagino, Trosna and, in making the main thrust along the west bank of the Oka River in the general axis of Kromy, by the end of the day of 20 July 1943, with the main forces of the army assault groups, to reach the line of the Kroma River in the sector Shumakova, Bol. Kolcheva, Kutafino, Krasn. Roshcha, having in mind operations subsequently toward Orel, Maryshkino.

3. The 13th Army, with attached units and reinforcements is to firmly hold the line: the eastern edge of Krasn. Slobodka, Saburovo, Trosna, Ochki, Sokolniki and with forces of at least five rifle divisions reinforced by tank units and strong artillery, in the morning of 19 July 1943 is to attack the enemy in the sector: Ozerki, Krasn. Zarya and, in making the main thrust with the left flank along the right bank of the Oka River in the general direction of Legedikha, Dvoretz, Graznyy and Kromy, with the main forces of the army assault group to successively capture the lines:

a) By the end of 19 July 1943--elev. 223.9 (1 km to the south of Bogoroditskoye), Verkh. Kamanets;

b) By the end of 20 July 1943--Khlopovo, Bukreyevskiy, Rechitsa, and with the mobile infantry and tank detachments to seize the crossings on the Kroma River in the sector of Shumakova, Bol. Kolcheva.

As the army assault group advances, defenses are to be successively created by the front to the northwest and east along the line: Arkhangel'skoye, Bogomolovka, Ilinskiy Poselov and then along the western bank of the Oka River to the mouth of the Kroma River.

Sector lines:

a) On the right--to Novopolevo--as before, thence to Filosofovo, Nesterovo;

b) On the left--to Gnilets--as before, then Gorchakovo, Zinovyev, Rechitsa, Bol. Kolcheva.

The main command post is to be moved to the region of Vtoryye Ponyri.

4. The 70th Army with attached units and reinforcements with two rifle divisions is to firmly hold the line of Verkh. Grankina, Chern, Nov. Svet, Oktyabrskiy, Khalzeva, Trofimovka, Bryantsovo, and with the remaining army forces on the morning of 19 July 1943 to attack the enemy in the sector: the forest to the south of Morozikha, Verkh. Grankina and, in making the main thrust along

the Trosna, Kromy highway, with the main forces of the army assault group to successively take the lines:

- a) By the end of 19 July 1943--Gorchakovo, Monastyrshchina, Lomovets;
- b) By the end of 20 July 1943--Kromskiy most, Kutafino, Kuvardino, Klesovo, Nov. Zhizn, and with the strong infantry and tank mobile detachments to capture the crossings on the Itska River, in the section of Ulyanovka, Samokhvalovo, Novo-Fedotovo (Zarevo).

Sector line on the left--as before.

5. The 2d Tank Army with the infantry and tanks of the 70th Army reaching the line of Gorchakovo, Monastyrshchina, Lomovets, is to break through in the section of Gorchakovo, Lomovets, with the immediate task of capturing the area of Kromy and subsequently bearing in mind actions in the general axis of Orel or Naryshkino.

6. The 16th Air Army when the infantry and tanks of the 70th Army have reached the line of Gorchakovo, Monastyrshchina, Lomovets, with all the army forces is to assist the offensive of the assault group of the 70th Army and subsequently the 2d Tank Army.

7. The directive is to be shown to: the commanders, the first members of the military councils and the chiefs of staff of the armies.

The remaining leading commanders of the army staffs are to be acquainted only as far as the tasks of their army.

Receipt is to be confirmed.

Commander of Central Front  
Army Gen Rokossovskiy

Member of Front Military Council  
Maj Gen Telegin

Chief of Staff  
Lt Gen Malinin

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 361, inv. 6079, file 174, sheets 86-89)

#### Document 4

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC TO THE COMMANDER OF THE BRYANSK FRONT  
TO DEFEAT THE MTSENSK ENEMY GROUPING OF 20 JULY 1943

Hq SHC orders:

- 1. The immediate task of the Bryansk Front is to defeat the Mtsensk enemy grouping and have the 3d Army reach the Oka River.

For this the 3d Tank Army of Rybalko, on the morning of 20 July, is to attack on the axis of Protasovo, Otrada, by the end of 20 July to cut the highway and

railroad of Mtsensk, Orel and, in developing the offensive toward Mtsensk from the south on 21 July, together with the 3d Army of Gorbатов, to complete the destruction of the Mtsensk enemy grouping and liberate the town of Mtsensk.

2. After carrying out this task, the 3d Tank Army of Rybalko is to head south in the aim of cutting the railroad of Mikhovoye, Orel and assisting the 63d Army of Kolpakchi in its reaching of the Oka River.

3. Subsequently, the 3d Tank Army of Rybalko is to cut the railroad of Orel, Kursk in the region upon the decision of the front commander and under favorable conditions to capture the town of Orel....

Hq SHC  
I. Stalin  
A. Antonov

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheet 179)

Document 5

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC TO THE COMMANDER OF THE CENTRAL FRONT  
ON PURSUING THE ENEMY IN THE OREL-KROMY SECTOR  
OF 22 JULY 1943

Due to the possible enemy pull-back from the Orel-Kromy Salient, it is essential:

1. For the 48th and 13th Armies to prepare to pursue the enemy, for which:
  - a) In each army, in addition to creating mobile detachments in the divisions, to have army reserves with attached tank units, self-propelled artillery and combat engineers....
  - b) To strengthen observation and reconnaissance of the enemy and more widely practice nighttime air reconnaissance....
  - c) In the event of a pull-back, to provide parallel pursuit of the enemy with the broad use of aviation.
2. From the front of the 70th Army, to make a strike with concentrated forces in the aim of coming out in the rears of the Orel-Kromy enemy grouping.

Antonov

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheet 180)

Document 6

FROM THE ORDER OF THE COMMANDER OF THE STEPPE FRONT  
TO THE COMMANDERS OF THE 53d, 69th AND 7th GUARDS ARMIES  
TO CAPTURE BELGOROD OF 5 AUGUST 1943

1. As a result of the successful breakthrough by the front's troops of the two defensive zones, the enemy is pulling back to the southwest, endeavoring to check the development of our offensive on intermediate lines.

The troops of the Voronezh Front are successfully developing the offensive and by the end of 4 August 1943, had reached the region of Bessonovka with the left wing.

I order:

a) The commander of the 53d Army with the I Mechanized Corps with a rapid and strong strike is to crush and destroy the enemy 6th Tank Division and to pursue it energetically in the general direction of Mikoyanovka.

By the end of 5 August 1943, the armies are to reach the front of Dolbino Station, marker 205.9, Tavrovo.

The I Mechanized Corps, by a strike from around the right flank of the army, in having an immediate task by 1000 hours on 5 August 1943 to reach the region of Repnoye is to cut off the enemy escape route to the south and southwest. The further task of the corps is to continue energetic pursuit in the general direction of Mikoyanovka and by the end of 5 August 1943 to capture Mikoyanovka, Varvarovka, Boldyrevka. To establish contact with units of the 5th Tank Army.

Sector lines with the 69th Army--Arkhangelskoye, Krasnoye, Tavrovo.

b) The commander of the 69th Army by a decisive strike is to destroy the cover of the enemy and capture Belgorod on 5 August 1943.

By the end of 5 August 1943 to reach the front: Krasnoye, Koloniya Dubovoye.

c) The commander of the 7th Guards Army as of dawn on 5 August is to break through the enemy defenses and by the end of the day reach a line: Koloniya Dubovoye, Tavrovo, Brodok and together with units of the 69th Army, surround the Belgorod enemy grouping.

The operation of routing the Belgorod enemy grouping is to be supported from the south by at least three divisions on the line of Novo-Nelidovka, Brodok, Toplinka.

2. I draw the attention of the commanders to the necessity of decisively eliminating the lag of the artillery behind the infantry and this is extremely important under the conditions of exploiting the success after breaking through enemy defenses....

In pursuit I demand that artillery strike forces be rapidly created and by artillery fire to prevent the enemy from digging in on intermediate lines.

3. Under the conditions of pursuing the retreating enemy, to change the methods of troop control. The staffs of the regiments and divisions are to be brought closer to the troops. The army staffs are to control the divisions and corps on a more mobile basis, using radio, messenger services and liaison aircraft.

4. I demand from the troops bold maneuvering and outflanking of enemy strongpoints; do not take them head-on and thereby not hold up the rate of advance...

Konev  
Zakharov

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 240, inv. 178508, file 2, sheets 13-17)

#### Document 7

#### COMBAT REPORT FROM COMMANDER OF STEPPE FRONT TO Hq SHC ON THE SUCCESSFUL ADVANCE OF THE FRONT'S TROOPS ON 6 AUGUST 1943

1. The troops of the Steppe Front during the night of 6 August completed the full clearing of Belgorod and in the morning continued the offensive.

In fighting the covering enemy troops endeavoring to hold out at individual intermediate strongpoints, the troops by the end of the day had advanced 6-8 km and captured the points of Gryaznoye, Repnoye, Krasnoye, Suprunovka, Pushkar-noye, Koloniya Dubovoye.

During the day 18 prisoners were taken belonging to the 168th, 198th and 106th Infantry Divisions and the 6th Tank Division.

Air reconnaissance has established the presence of infantry-occupied trenches on the front of Dolbino, Novaya Derevnnya, Tavrovo. The attempt during the day of four scouts to penetrate the area of Kharkov was unsuccessful. The area of Kharkov, Liptsy is covered by fighter aviation operating in two or three levels in this area.

2. The 53d Army, having overcome individual enemy strongpoints on the rail line, has advanced slowly and by the end of the day was fighting on the line of Pristenok, Novaya Derevnnya, Shagarovka. The I Mechanized Corps, having broken through the enemy defenses, broke into Dolbino with the 35th Mechanized Brigade, Novaya Derevnnya with the 37th Mechanized Brigade and Shagarovka with the 219th Tank Brigade, but, being repeatedly counterattacked by the enemy, was forced to retreat and by the end of the day continued to fight for Dolbino, Novaya Derevnnya.

Enemy aviation during the day in groups of 15-20 aircraft repeatedly bombed the battle formations of the army and the I Mechanized Corps.



3. The 69th Army, during the night of 6 August, having completed the elimination of individual centers in Belgorod and having crossed the enemy defenses on the line of Krasnoye, Suprunovka, fought its way slowly forward, having captured Koloniya Dubovoye. By the end of the day fighting was underway on the line of markers 212.6, 213.3, 221.3, the forest to the south of Koloniya Dubovoye.

4. The 7th Guards Army during the day, in cooperation with the 375th Rifle Division, captured the eastern part of Koloniya Dubovoye. The former position was held on the remaining sector of the front.

5. On 6 August, the air force of the front made 450 aircraft sorties for strafing, bombing and reconnaissance of the enemy.

In air battles, 24 enemy aircraft were shot down. Enemy aviation made over 400 aircraft sorties.

Konev

Zakharov

Susaykov

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 240, inv. 2779, file 290, sheets 44-45)

#### Document 8

#### REPORT TO Hq SHC ON THE PLAN FOR THE PENDING OPERATION FOR AN OFFENSIVE IN THE BELGOROD-KHARKOV SECTOR OF 6 AUGUST 1943

We report the following:

In line with the successful breakthrough of the enemy front and the development of the offensive in the Belgorod-Kharkov sector, the operation subsequently will be conducted according to the following plan:

1. The 53d Army with the Solomatina corps will advance along the Belgorod-Kharkov highway, making the main thrust on the axis of Dergachi.

The army should reach the line of Olshany, Dergachi, having relieved the Zhadov units on this line.

The 69th Army is to advance to the left of the 53d Army on the Cheremoshnoye axis. Upon reaching Cheremoshnoye, the 69th Army, having turned over a pair of the best divisions to Managarov, itself is to remain in the front reserve for manning up in the region of Mikoyanovka, Cheremoshnoye, Gryaznoye.

The 69th Army as rapidly as possible must receive an additional 20,000 men.

The 7th Guards Army will now advance from the region of Pushkarnoye to Brodok and then to Bochkovka, turning the enemy front from north to south.

From the line of Cheremoshnoye, Ziborovka, the 7th Guards Army will make the main thrust to Tsirkuny and reach the line of Cherkasskoye, Lozovoye, Tsirkuny, Klyuchkin.

With a portion of the forces from the area of Ziborovka, an advance will be made on Murom and then Ternovaya in order to help the 57th Army cross the Severskiy Donets River in the region of Rubezhnoye, Star. Saltov.

2. The 57th Army of the Southwestern Front should be transferred to the Steppe Front and at present a strike is being prepared by the 57th Army from the line of Rubezhnoye, Star. Saltov in the general direction of Nepokrytaya and then the Sovkhoz imeni Frunze. The 57th Army must reach the line of Kutuzovka Sovkhoz, the Sovkhoz imeni Frunze, Rogan (northern).

If the 57th Army is left under the Southwestern Front, then it must, with the arrival of Shumilov in the Murom area, be obliged to go over to the offensive on the above-indicated axis.

3. For carrying out the second stage, that is, the Kharkov Operation, the Steppe Front must receive the 5th Guards Tank Army which will reach the region of Olshany, Staryy Merchik, Ogultsy.

We propose organizing the Kharkov Operation tentatively in the following manner:

a) The 53d Army, in cooperation with the Rotmistrov army, will capture Kharkov from the west and southwest.

b) The Shumilov army will advance from north to south from the line of Tsirkuny, Dergachi.

c) The 57th Army will advance from the east from the line of the Sovkhoz imeni Frunze, Rogan, outflanking Kharkov on the south.

d) The 69th Army (if it has been brought up to strength by this time) is to be deployed between Zhadov and Managarov in the area of Olshany and will advance to the south for supporting the Kharkov Operation from the south.

The 69th Army will reach the line of Snezhkov Kut, Minkovka, Prosyanoeye, Novoselovka.

e) The left flank of the Voronezh Front must reach the line of Otrada, Kolomak, Snezhkov Kut.

This task is to be carried out by the Zhadov army and the left flank of the 27th Army.

It is advisable to have the Katukov army in the area of Kovyagi, Alekseyevka, Murafa.

The Southwestern Front must attack from the area of Zamostye in the general direction of Merefa, advancing along both banks of the Mzha River, with a portion of the forces advancing via Chuguyev to Osnova while a portion of the forces must clear the enemy out of the forest to the south of Zamostye and reach the line of Novoselovka, Okhochaya, Verkh. Bishkin, Geyevka.

4. For carrying out the Kharkov Operation, in addition to the 20,000 additional men, it is essential to provide 15,000 for bringing up to strength the divisions of the 53d and 7th Guards Armies and for bringing up to strength the front's tank units to provide 200 T-34 tanks and 100 T-70 and 35 KV. Four regiments of self-propelled artillery and two engineer brigades are to be shifted. The air force of the front is to be brought up to strength with ground attack planes, fighters and bombers in the following amounts: 90 fighters, 40 P-2 and 60 L-2.

We request confirmation.

Zhukov

Konev

Zakharov

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 48, inv. 1691, file 233, sheets 397-401)

Document 9

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC ON APPROVING THE PLAN PROPOSED BY  
G. K. ZHUKOV FOR CONDUCTING THE "POLKOVODETS RUMYANTSEV" OPERATION  
OF 6 AUGUST 1943

The plan presented by Comrade Yur'yev for conducting Operation "Rumyantsev" is approved by Hq SHC and at the same time it points out:

1. The 57th Army of Gagen from 2400 hours of 8 August is to be shifted from the Southwestern Front to the troops of the Steppe Front with the task of assisting the main grouping of the Steppe Front in capturing Kharkov by attacking around Kharkov from the south....
2. The basic task of the Southwestern Front is to make the main thrust to the south on the general axis of Golaya Dolina, Krasnoarmeyskoye and, in cooperation with the Southern Front, defeat the Donets Basin enemy grouping and capture the area of Gorlovka, Stalino.
3. The basic task of the Southern Front is to make the main thrust on the general axis of Kuybyshevo, Stalino where it should link up with the assault group of the Southwestern Front.

The Southwestern and Southern Fronts are to be ready for the offensive by 13-14 August 1943....

4. The coordinating of operations is entrusted: to Comrade Yur'yev between the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts and to Comrade Aleksandrov between the Southwestern and Southern Fronts.<sup>3</sup>

Hq SHC  
I. Stalin

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheets 218-219)

Document 10

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC TO Z. K. ZHUKOV ON ACCELERATING  
THE LIBERATION OF KHARKOV OF 10 AUGUST 1943

Hq SHC considers it essential to seal off Kharkov by rapidly cutting the basic rail and road lines in the directions of Poltava, Krasnograd, Lozovaya....

For this purpose, the Katukov 1st Tank Army is to cut the basic lines in the area of Kovyagi, Valki, and the Rotmistrov 5th Guards Tank Army in outflanking Kharkov from the southwest, to cut the lines in the region of Merefa.

Hq SHC  
I. Stalin

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheet 223)

Document 11

ORDER OF COMMANDER OF STEPPE FRONT TO COMMANDERS OF  
53d, 69th, 7th GUARDS, 57th, 5th TANK ARMIES AND 5th AIR ARMY  
TO ENCIRCLE AND DESTROY KHARKOV ENEMY GROUPING OF 10 AUGUST 1943

1. The enemy is endeavoring in individual unprepared but tactically advantageous lines to check our advance on the approaches to Kharkov.
2. The armies of the front have been given the task of encircling and destroying the enemy Kharkov grouping and taking Kharkov.
3. In execution of this task, I order:

At 0900 hours on 11 August 1943, the armies of the front are to go over to a decisive offensive.

Massed artillery groups are to be created in the sector of the main thrust in the zone of each army.

Artillery softening up--30 minutes.

Start of artillery softening up--0830 hours.

Attack--0900 hours.

Artillery softening up is to be carried out according to the following plan:

- a) An artillery strike against the entire forward edge and deep in the defenses for 5 minutes.

A volley of rocket artillery against the infantry accumulation and the mortar-artillery batteries. In the course of the battles, the rocket volleys are to be employed not only by divisions or regiments but also by individual units and batteries.

- b) A 20-minute neutralization and destruction of targets on the forward edge and deep in the defenses by using aimed fire.
- c) A 5-minute artillery strike against the enemy forward edge, the mortar-artillery batteries and observation posts, after which the infantry attack.
- d) A 10-minute, as intense as possible fire ahead of the attacking infantry a distance of 150 m from it.

### 3. Tasks of the day:

- a) The commander of the 5th Guards Tank Army--by a decisive strike, having assembled the army into a fist and in developing the main thrust on the axis of Peresechnaya, Lobotin, by the end of the day to reach the region of Budy, Korotich, Ogultsy, having cut the enemy escape routes to the west.
- b) The commander of the 53d Army--to reach the front of Peresechnaya, the western edge of Kharkov, to cut the highway and railroad running from Kharkov to the west. The I Mechanized Corps is to reach the region of Gavrilovka.
- c) The commander of the 69th Army--to attack with the right flank around the forests and by the end of the day reach the northern edge of Kharkov.
- d) The commander of the 7th Guards Army--to attack with the left flank on the axis of Novo-Aleksandrovka and by the end of the day come out on the eastern and southeastern edge of Kharkov.
- e) The commander of the 57th Army--in making the main thrust on the axis of Peresechnaya, Stepanki Sovkhoz, Osnova, by the end of the day to come out on the southern edge of Kharkov, Osnova, Bezlyudovka.

On the left flank to develop an energetic offensive on the axis of Rogan and secure oneself to the left along the Udy River.

All the tank brigades are to unite under a single command and carrying infantry are to enter the breach with the task of coming out on the southern edge of Kharkov and cutting the roads running from Kharkov to the south.

4. The army commanders, for controlling battle, are to have observation posts in the sector of the main thrust. The artillery commander with his staff should be at the observation post for directing the artillery.

### 5. The commander of the 5th Air Army:

- a) Is to cover the main groupings of the 5th Guards Tank Army and the 53d Army;
- b) By ground attack and bomber operations to assist the offensive of the 5th Guards Tank Army and 53d Army;
- c) To prevent the bringing up of enemy reserves to the line of Peresechnaya, Kharkov.

6. Report on receipt, orders given and execution.

Konev  
Zakharov

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 240, inv. 2779, file 33, sheets 11, 11 verso)

Document 12

FROM DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC TO G. K. ZHUKOV AND A. M. VASILEVSKIY  
ON OPERATIONS OF VORONEZH, STEPPE AND SOUTHWESTERN FRONTS  
OF 12 AUGUST 1943

In line with the successful development of the offensive in the Kharkov sector by the troops of the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts, Hq SHC orders:

1. For the Voronezh Front. By an attack by the Katukov 1st Tank Army on the general axis of Valki, Nov. Vodolaga, together with the Rotmistrov 5th Guards Tank Army, to cut the escape routes for the enemy Kharkov grouping to the south and southwest.

After the defeat of the enemy Kharkov grouping and the capture of Kharkov, the offensive is to be continued on the general axis of Poltava, Kremenchug and by 23-24 August the main forces should reach the line of Yareski Station, Poltava, Karlovka.

Subsequently to advance to the Dnepr River and reach the front of Kremenchug, Orlik, having provided for the capturing of crossings over the Dnepr River by the mobile units.

For ensuring the operation with one's assault grouping on the right wing of the front by 23-24 August to reach the Psyl River where it should dig in securely....

2. For the Steppe Front. After the capturing of Kharkov, to continue the offensive on the general axis of Krasnograd, Verkhnedneprovsk and by 24-25 August the main forces should reach a line of Karlovka, Krasnograd, Kagichevka Station.

Subsequently, to develop the defensive toward the Dnepr River, having provided for the capturing of crossings over the Dnepr River with the mobile units.

3. For the Southwestern Front. The main forces are to attack from the front of Izyum, Bogorodichnoye on the general axis of Barvenkovo, Pavlograd.

With the right wing of the front to immediately begin to cross the Severskiy Donets River to the south of Chuguyev and by an attack on Zamostye, Taranovka and then to the south, in cooperation with the 57th Army of the Steppe Front, to roll up the enemy defenses along the western bank of the Severskiy Donets River. By 24-25 August, the main forces of the front should reach the line of Ligovka, Lozovaya, Barvankovo.

Subsequently the offensive is to be developed on the general axis of Pavlograd, Orekhov in the aim of reaching a front of Zaporozhye, Pologi and cutting the escape routes to the west for the Donets Basin enemy grouping.

4. Report on receipt and issued orders.

5. The current directive is to be shown to Vatutin and Konev by Comrade Yur'yev and to Malinovskiy by Comrade Aleksandrov.

Hq SHC  
I. Stalin

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheets 233-234)

#### Document 13

#### INSTRUCTIONS OF MAR SU G. K. ZHUKOV TO COMMANDERS OF VORONEZH AND STEPPE FRONTS ON THE USE OF ARTILLERY BREAKTHROUGH DIVISIONS OF 15 AUGUST 1943

Headquarters has given you an artillery breakthrough corps and breakthrough divisions in order to break through the enemy defenses. In the first stage, in breaking through the enemy defenses on 5 August 1943, you correctly used the artillery breakthrough divisions and as a result of the correct use, the mission was brilliantly performed.

In pursuit, the artillery divisions have also been correctly used, reinforcing the rifle divisions with the light brigades of the artillery divisions.

Presently, the situation has changed, we are in our third day of an offensive against organized enemy defenses. Consequently, in the existing situation it is essential to use the artillery divisions for breaking through in the main, crucial sector but in fact it turns out that the artillery divisions have been given out to the rifle divisions and are engaged in pushing the divisions along and not with breaking through.

I demand:

1. The artillery breakthrough divisions are to be assembled in the main sector.
2. An artillery breakthrough is to be organized having created on the main sector 150-170 barrels per kilometer of front.
3. The basic mass of tanks and self-propelled artillery guns is to be assembled in the selected sector.
4. The breakthrough is to be organized in sectors making it possible to out-flank the enemy and envelop its groupings from the flanks and rear. Head-on breakthroughs leading to heavy bloody fighting are not to be permitted.

Yur'yev

(TsAMO SSSR, folio 48, inv. 5, file 496, sheets 163-164)

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Code name for commander of Western Front, Col Gen V. D. Sokolovskiy.
- <sup>2</sup> Code name for commander of Bryansk Front, Col Gen M. M. Popov.
- <sup>3</sup> Yur'yev and Aleksandrov are the code names of Mars SU G. K. Zhukov and A. M. Vasilevskiy, respectively.

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## BLACK SEA FLEET OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II EXAMINED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 83 (signed to press 1 Jul 83) pp 65-71

[Article by Vice Adm N. Klitnyy, chief of staff of the Red Banner Black Sea Fleet: "The Assistance of the Black Sea Fleet to the Soviet Army Troops on the Maritime Sector in the Offensive Operations of 1943-1944"]

[Text] Assistance to the maritime flanks of the fronts both during the period of the strategic defensive and during the strategic offensive by the Soviet Army, comprised one of the most important tasks of the Navy in the course of the Great Patriotic War. Depending upon the scale of the combat operations, the forces involved in them and the nature of the tasks set for the fleets, their cooperation with the ground forces was expressed either in the making of joint strikes against the enemy which were coordinated in terms of target, place and time or in carrying out independent combat tasks in the interests of the maritime groupings.

The assistance of the Black Sea Fleet to the ground forces during the offensive operations on the maritime sector was expressed by providing sea cover for the flanks of the troops against strikes by enemy naval forces, the providing of artillery and air support for the troops, the landing of amphibious forces on the enemy-defended coast, assisting with naval troops in destroying an enemy grouping pressed to the sea and preventing its evacuation by sea, the disrupting of enemy maritime shipments and the sea transporting of our troops as well as materiel.

The landing of amphibious troops. Among the basic types of joint operations of the fleet with the forces of the Soviet Army, during the Great Patriotic War amphibious landings of varying scale assumed particular significance. The largest operations involving forces of the Black Sea Fleet during the designated period were: the landing operation in South Ozereyka--Stanichka (3-15 February 1943), the Novorossiysk Operation (9-16 September 1943); the Kerch-Eltigen Landing Operation (31 October-11 December 1943).

These operations were conducted in the aim of assisting the advancing troops in breaking through heavily reinforced lines on the maritime sectors, capturing landing areas on the coast for conducting offensive operations, as well as for capturing ports, naval bases and enemy strongpoints.

The preparations for the landing of the amphibious force at South Ozereyka--Stanichka started at the end of November 1942. They included a number of exercises and drills for the troops to be landed and the ship detachments in landing on empty coast in a short period of time, in quickly bringing the ships to the shore, in working out the operations of the troops on the shore at night and the joint operating of the ships. Particular attention was paid to developing cooperation among all the forces participating in the operation. Two light piers and one heavy one were equipped for the speed and convenience of landing the troops and unloading the equipment.

Party political work was widely developed and this was aimed at carrying out the difficult task of landing the force. The fleet military council put out a special appeal to the personnel urging them to honorably carry out the tasks confronting them. The fleet political directorate held special seminars with the political workers and the party organization secretaries on the forms of political support for carrying out the combat tasks in the landing operation.

The intense activity of the command, staffs and political bodies ensured the success of the landing operation. Under continuous enemy action, the Black Sea Fleet delivered to the beachhead in the area of Stanichka--Myskhako around 80,000 soldiers and officers, up to 400 weapons of various caliber, more than 350 mortars and machine guns, up to 30 tanks, over 16,000 tons of ammunition, food and other freight. The Soviet troops landed on the beachhead and continuously supported by the fleet created a real threat to the right flank of the Nazi defenses in the region of Novorossiysk, they diverted significant enemy forces to themselves, they completely deprived the enemy of the opportunity to use the Novorossiysk port and created favorable conditions for the subsequent operation of liberating Novorossiysk in September 1943.

The Novorossiysk Operation has gone down in history as one of the well-planned, prepared and executed joint offensive operations by the Army and Navy.

Around 150 ships and vessels of the Black Sea Fleet were assigned to transport the force by sea and support its landing. Air support for the landing was provided by 150 aircraft of the fleet and the front. Around 7,000 soldiers and officers were landed along with more than 40 guns of different calibers and around 150 mortars. The amphibious force carried out its tasks successfully. In exploiting the success, the troops of the Northern Caucasus Front, together with the amphibious force, drove the enemy out of Novorossiysk. As a result enemy defenses in the region of Novorossiysk were broken. The Nazi troops, fearing encirclement, accelerated the general retreat toward the Kerch Strait.

The success of the the Novorossiysk Operation was determined primarily by the correct choice for the place of the landing, by air supremacy in the region of the operation, by the simultaneous and surprise landing of the force along a broad front, by the continuous support for the landing units by artillery fire and air strikes (after the landing) as well as by the prompt reinforcing of the landed troops with the second wave of the landing force. Also felt were the precise planning of the operation, the careful reconnaissance of enemy defenses, the well-organized training of the forces, flexible and continuous control of the forces in the combat for the landing and in the operation as a whole, in addition to the carefully organized political, special, logistical and technical

support. Important factors in the success were the decisiveness, valor, the high moral steadfastness and reasonable initiative of the soldiers and commanders and their wholehearted loyalty to the motherland, the Communist Party and the Soviet government.

The Kerch-Eltigen Landing Operation, as the first stage of a frontal offensive operation to liberate the Kerch Peninsula, was carried out with the aim of capturing the initial beachhead on the Kerch Peninsula for successfully developing combat operations to liberate the Crimea along with troops from the Fourth Ukrainian Front.

On 12 October 1943, the commander of the Northern Caucasus Front, Col Gen I. Ye. Petrov, set for the Black Sea Fleet (commander, Vice Adm F. S. Oktyabr'skiy) and the Azov Flotilla which was operationally under it (commander, Rear Adm S. G. Gorshkov) the task of landing troops from the Taman to the Kerch Peninsulas in the aim of capturing its eastern portion with the city and port of Kerch. Subsequently, the Black Sea Fleet was to provide the landed troops with all types of supplies and move reinforcements.

Around 220 ships and vessels of the Black Sea Fleet and Azov Flotilla participated in the landing. It was supported by the air forces of the fleet and the front as well as by artillery (more than 500 guns of varying caliber). Around 9,500 soldiers and commanders were landed, up to 70 units of equipment were delivered as well as over 300 tons of ammunition and food. The landing was carried out under the conditions of crossing antilanding defenses which had been previously prepared by the enemy. After the landing of the two waves of the landing force, the ships of the fleet continued to transport troops from the front to the Kerch Peninsula.

As a result of the Kerch-Eltigen Landing Operation, the troops of the Separate Maritime Army captured an important operational beachhead which played a significant role in liberating the Crimea from the Nazis. Under the conditions of the severe winter of 1943-1944, the ships of the fleet successfully carried out the task of supplying the landed troops with food, ammunition and combat equipment, including tanks, artillery and motor vehicles.

In all the designated landing operations, the surface vessels of the fleet landed the troops of the landing force, they neutralized the enemy antilanding defenses and by the firing of ship's guns supported the actions of the landing force on shore and covered it from the sea. Aviation was employed for covering the force during the move at sea, for supporting it on the shore and neutralizing enemy defenses. The fleet coastal artillery neutralized the enemy defenses and supported the landing force. Subunits of naval infantry were part of the landed troops.

The experience of the landing operations confirmed the need for their careful preparation, the organizing of close cooperation among all forces involved in the landing, and their clear control.

Disrupting enemy sea shipments. As a result of the successful offensive operations by the Soviet Army, the Nazi troops on the southern wing of the Soviet-German Front, in 1942-1943, lost a significant portion of their overland lines

of communications and were forced to intensify sea shipments. The Northern Caucasus enemy grouping was completely dependent upon sea shipments and after the taking of Rostov and the reaching of the Azov Sea this grouping was completely isolated on the Taman Peninsula. For the enemy there was significantly greater importance for the sea shipments from Bulgaria and Romania to the ports in the northwestern part of the Black Sea and the Crimea. In line with this, on 1 January 1943, the People's Commissar of the Navy, Adm N. G. Kuznetsov, ordered the Black Sea Fleet to develop maximum activities in this area.

Simultaneously under the conditions of the situation existing on the Black Sea, the main efforts of the fleet had to be concentrated in assisting the Soviet Army troops in eliminating the Northern Caucasus grouping. They were given the task of cutting the sea lines of communications for the Nazi troops isolated on the Taman Peninsula using submarines, surface vessels and aviation. In organizing combat operations, the fleet was not to permit the evacuation of the enemy by sea.

During 1943, the surface vessels, submarines and air force of the Black Sea Fleet, in carrying out the set tasks, attacked the enemy ships and transports at sea and at the bases, they established a blockade and attacked the coast and laid minefields. Thus, during the period from 8 February through 3 March 1943, the bomber and ground attack aviation of the fleet made 65 bombing raids against the ports of the Taman and Kerch Peninsulas, making 885 aircraft sorties and dropping around 180 tons of bombs. At the same time the surface vessels made around 90 sorties for standing blockade patrol. In the aim of conducting combat operations on the enemy sea lines of communications in the northeastern part of the Black Sea, in 1943, torpedo boats made around 600 sorties. In the interests of increasing effective operations, a decision was taken to use them for minelaying. From June through September 1943, they laid around 470 bottom and anchored mines and antisweep mines.

The fleet's submarines were at their stations in the area of the enemy sea lines of communications, destroying its ships and transports. Over the period from 1 January through 9 October 1943, they made 78 combat runs for operations on the lines of communications and 57 times they came into combat contact with enemy combat ships and vessels. Over this time for attacking ships at sea and in ports, the ground attack aviation of the fleet air force made 631 aircraft sorties and the bomber aviation made 2,454.

As a result of the combat operations, more than 150 combat ships and transports were sunk and around 120 damaged. Here the submarines sank and damaged 17 combat ships with a total tonnage of 6,400 tons and 26 transports with a total tonnage of 72,619 gross registered tons. Over 70 percent of the enemy ships and vessels sunk and damaged by the fleet air force during the period of the liberation of the Caucasus were ships and vessels transporting and supplying the Nazi troops.

As a result of the offensive operations, the troops of the Soviet Army by the end of 1943 had reached the left bank of the lower Dnepr and the shores of Karkinit Bay. The Separate Maritime Army, with aid from the Black Sea Fleet and Azov Flotilla, held the captured beachhead on the eastern shore of the Kerch Peninsula. This provided an opportunity for the Black Sea Fleet in the

spring of 1944 to relocate the torpedo boats in the Karkinit Bay and the aviation on its shore and to increase operations on the sea lines of communications in the northwestern part of the Black Sea. The 17th German Army was completely cut off. In preparing to evacuate, the enemy shifted all available transport to Sevastopol.

In April 1944, Hq SHC sent a directive to the Black Sea Fleet with instructions to systematically disrupt enemy lines of communications in the Black Sea and in the immediate future the disrupting of communications with the Crimea was to be considered the main task. Submarines, bomber and torpedo aviation were to be considered for operations on the sea lines of communications with bomber and ground attack aviation and torpedo boats on the close lines.

In carrying out these missions, over the period from April through May 1944, the fleet aviation made more than 6,300 aircraft sorties and laid around 218 mines on the Danube. The fleet submarines, in cooperation with the aviation, destroyed enemy transports and ships in the northwestern part of the Black Sea. They made over 20 sorties to the area between the ports of the Crimea and Romania. The fleet's torpedo boats made around 270 runs to look for and destroy convoys. Regardless of the significant enemy fire resistance, the torpedo boat sailors acted boldly and decisively.

As a result of the operations of various forces from the Black Sea Fleet during the period of the Crimean Operation, the enemy lost more than 80 aircraft, 78 combat ships and transports (including the transports "Totila" and "Teia") with a total tonnage of 12,000 gross registered tons. Over 4,000 Nazis were lost on them.

In the Crimean Operation, wide use was made of all basic types of fleet combat weapons. For disrupting sea movements and the supplying of the maritime enemy groupings, fleet submarines and aviation were basically employed. Aviation was responsible for over three-quarters of all the enemy ships, vessels and combat ships sunk or damaged. During the operation the aviation, submarines and torpedo boats used 200 torpedos. In no other operation were torpedos used on such a scale.

The success of the Crimean Offensive Operation in the first half of 1944 fundamentally altered the operational situation in the Black Sea Theater. The Black Sea Fleet returned to its main base of Sevastopol and acquired an extensive airfield network in the Crimea. This significantly facilitated the carrying out of subsequent joint operations to defeat the enemy troops and eliminate the enemy naval forces on the Black Sea.

Support of sea movements and the defense of sea lines of communications. Enemy aviation, submarines, torpedo boats, coastal artillery (particularly on the lines of communications in Tsemes Bay and the Kerch Strait) and minefields represented a major danger for the movement of ships, convoys and individual vessels in 1943-1944.

Under these conditions, in the aim of daily defense for the sea lines of communications, a convoy service was organized, a system of ship patrols was established, the areas of naval bases were built up and measures were carried out

for all types of defense of the transports and vessels while at sea as well as docked at the unloading and loading points.

Because of the shortage of escort forces, the convoys moved directly close to shore in a semicircular cruising order. For the purposes of concealment, they moved during darkness or under the cover of smokescreens. Upon achieving air supremacy, they began to be covered by fighter aviation. Their moves were preceded by air reconnaissance. Fighters patrolled over the loading and unloading points. Moreover, alert duty at the airfields was organized. To sea the bases and ports were protected by patrols from groups of escort and torpedo boats. Convoys moving along the western shore of the Caucasus were covered by the artillery of the coastal and antiaircraft batteries.

Assistance from the fleet forces to the troops on the maritime flank of the front in destroying the enemy troop grouping pressed to the sea. With the liberation of the Crimea and the northwestern coast of the Black Sea, combat operations in the Black Sea Theater entered the final phase. In the second half of August 1944, the Black Sea Fleet participated in the Iasi-Kishinev Operation. It was given the task of providing fire support for the troops on the maritime flank of the front, disrupting the enemy coastal sea lines of communications and making air strikes against enemy naval bases. The Danube Naval Flotilla was to land troops to the northwest and south of Akkerman and with the reaching of the Danube by the front's troops, to aid them in crossing the river and ensure unobstructed travel along the river for the Soviet ships and vessels.

Prior to the start of the operation, in the second half of August 1943 and in the course of it, the fleet air force made several strikes against the ports of Constanta and Sulina, where there were up to 200 enemy combat ships and auxiliary vessels. As a result of these strikes, more than 95 ships and vessels of the German Romanian Fleet were sunk and damaged and this significantly weakened the enemy naval forces.

In approaching the eastern shore of the Dnestr Estuary, the troops of the Third Ukrainian Front, with assistance from the Danube Flotilla (more than 500 ships and vessels), the air force and artillery of the fleet coastal defenses, began to cross it on 22 August. On 23 August, by the end of the day the main forces of the Romanian Army (five divisions) had been surrounded and the troops of the Third Ukrainian Front were continuing to eliminate the surrounded enemy grouping.

The successful carrying out of the tasks by the fleet forces was achieved due to the careful organization of their actions with the front's troops, to the surprise of crossing the water barrier, to the dependable and continuous control of the forces and to the self-sacrifice and total heroism of the personnel.

After the surrounding of the maritime enemy grouping, the Danube Flotilla began to carry out the task of the operation's second stage, the breaking into the Danube. On 24 August, ships from the Flotilla broke into the Kiliya mouth of the Danube and, in operating jointly with a landing force, occupied Kiliya and Vilkovo. Some 5,000 enemy soldiers and officers were taken prisoner. On 26 August, Tulcea was occupied. The Romanian River Flotilla surrendered.

The Danube Flotilla of the Black Sea Fleet completely captured the lower courses of the Danube and this was an important operational success in the course of the Iasi-Kishinev Operation. Due to the prompt and energetic actions of the flotilla, the major enemy transport artery along the Danube was broken, and its naval group was split into two parts: one remained on the Black Sea and the other on the Danube. Subsequently, the Danube Flotilla participated in the joint operations of the Soviet Army units which were advancing up the Danube and provided transport. On 29 August 1944, Constanta was taken and a portion of the ships and aircrafts of the fleet air force was re-deployed here.

In the course of the offensive by the troops of the fronts, the Black Sea Fleet was given the task of sealing off the escape of German ships from the ports of Varna and Burgas and by the firing of the ship artillery and the landing of tactical parties to support the advance of the troops of the Third Ukrainian Front and their capture of Varna and Burgas. On 8 September the fleet air force landed a party in the area of Lake Varna and a detachment of torpedo boats broke into Varna Port. Around 30 German launches and other auxiliary vessels remained at the Varna roadsteads.

In 2 days, 8-9 September 1944, the troops of the Third Ukrainian Front together with the fleet captured Varna and Burgas. With this active operations by the Black Sea Fleet ended, since the German Fleet on the Black Sea had ceased to exist. The basic portion of it, including 74 ship pennants was sunk by the Nazis in Bulgarian territorial waters near Varna while the submarines were sunk off the coasts of Turkey.

The crushing attack by the Soviet Army made in August-September 1944 against the enemy grouping on the southern wing of the Soviet-German Front by the troops of the Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts in cooperation with the Black Sea Fleet was of major political and strategic significance as Moldavia was liberated and Romania withdrew from the war on the side of Nazi Germany.

The cooperation carried out in the course of the operation between the Third Ukrainian Front and the Black Sea Fleet played an important role in defeating the enemy on the maritime sector. The actions of the fleet's formations and units during the period of the liberation of Romania and Bulgaria were highly esteemed by Hq SHC. The formations and units participating in the capturing of the ports were given the names Sulina, Tulcea, Constanta, Varna and Burgas.

The Great Patriotic War was not only a thorough testing for the preparation and execution of combat operations by the fleet forces in offensive operations on the maritime sectors, but also a major stage in further developing the forms and methods for their carrying out of a broad range of combat tasks.

In assisting the ground forces on the maritime sectors, the surface ships provided blockade patrols on the approaches to the coast, they carried out nighttime searches for enemy combat ships and transports, they laid minefields on the enemy lines of communications and conducted raiding operations for firing on enemy held ports and coast. The submarines also stood blockade duty and also operated on the basic maritime transport arteries and landed reconnaissance groups in the rear of the Nazi troops. The fleet aviation attacked enemy

troops and other ground installations, ships and transports at sea and in ports, it covered its own ships, and laid mines on the enemy lines of communications. A new feature in the development of Soviet naval art in the offensive operations on the maritime sectors was the working out of the methods of assisting the ground forces in destroying the enemy groupings pressed to the coast.

The last war convincingly confirmed the dependence of the successful outcome of the operations upon the coordinated reciprocal efforts of the field forces and formations of all the armed services participating in them.

The experience of organizing and maintaining cooperation among the forces during the Great Patriotic War has not lost its importance under present-day conditions. At the same time, the army of the Armed Forces with modern weapons and equipment creates a different situation for the combat activities of the fleet and this is largely different from the one which existed during the war years.

The change in the conditions of armed combat, as brought about by the development and standardization of weapons, has caused a profound reciprocal penetration of the fleet into the sphere of operations of the ground forces and vice versa. This capacity can be realized both in the form of the joint operations of the fleet and the front and in the form of independent operations.

In comparison with the last war, the role of the fleet has increased in landing amphibious parties on the enemy-occupied coast and in repelling the landing of enemy amphibious forces in the rear of troops advancing on the maritime sectors.

As the strike force of the probable enemy navies has risen, and primarily their carrier task forces and nuclear missile submarines making it possible to operate against the troops of a front to a great depth while remaining in distant areas of the ocean, the responsibility of the fleet has increased significantly to protect the troops from sea attack. As before there are an ongoing role and importance for fleet combat operations on the maritime lines of communications to prevent enemy movements of troops and military cargo.

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## EXPERIENCE OF REDEPLOYMENT OF NAVY SHIPS IN WORLD WAR II TRACED

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[Article by Capt 1st Rank (Res) V. Vorob'yev: "Redeployment of Ships in the Course of the Great Patriotic War"]

[Text] The redeployment of ships from one fleet to another was carried out even before the war. Thus, at the beginning of 1930, the ships of the line "Parizhskaya kommuna" and the cruiser "Profintern" arrived in the Black Sea from the Baltic and in 1933, the destroyers "Uritsiy," "Kuybyshev" and "Karl Libknekht," the submarines "Dekabrist," "Narodovolets" and "Krasnogvardeyets" and the escort vessels "Uragan" and "Smerch" arrived in the North. In 1936, the destroyers "Stalin" and "Voykov" moved by sea over the Northern Seaway from the Baltic Fleet to the Pacific. In subsequent years, the submarine Shch-423 was redeployed by the same route to the Pacific. In 1938, the hydrographic vessels "Polyarnyy" and "Partizan" moved across the Atlantic and the Pacific from Leningrad to Vladivostok and in the following year two detachments of high-speed minesweepers arrived from Sevastopol and Kronshtadt in the Far East.

During the years of the Great Patriotic War, the redeployment of ships in the aim of reinforcing individual fleets at the expense of others assumed particular importance. Their movement to the new theater was made both over external (sea and ocean) as well as inland (river and lake) waterways. Often the redeployment over inland waterways was carried out in combination with the use of rail transport. As a total during the war more than 1,700 ships were moved over the inland routes (submarines, large and small subchasers, torpedo boats, minesweepers, various launches and so forth).<sup>1</sup>

An example of the first major redeployment of ships from the Pacific to the Northern Fleet by the Northern Seaway was the moving of the leader "Baku" and the destroyers "Raz'yarennyy" and "Razumnyy" which commenced on 15 June and continued until 14 October 1942. Transports with various cargo traveled along with them. This move was given the code name "Special-Purpose Expedition-18" (EON-18).

The ships were redeployed in accord with the order of the People's Commissar of the Navy of 8 June 1942. Leadership over the move of the EON-18 was assigned as follows: from Vladivostok to Provideniya Bay to the command and staff of the Pacific Fleet; from Provideniya Bay to Dikson Island, to the Main Naval

Staff of the Navy; from Dikson to Polyarnyy, to the command and staff of the Northern Fleet. The ships traveled the difficult route through Arctic ice escorted by icebreakers which were assigned by the Main Administration of the Northern Seaway. Such an organization of the move was caused by the particular features of the geographic conditions on each segment of the route and because of the need to ensure safety for the ships, their continuous supply with material and dependable, continuous communications. The successful conclusion of the move fully confirmed the correctness of this decision.

Capt 1st Rank V. N. Obukhov who had great experience in navigating in the Arctic directed the escorting of the detachment.<sup>2</sup> He controlled the ships through a specially organized cruise staff.

Regardless of the promptly taken measures to maintain the secrecy of the move, the Nazi command, due to the efforts of Japanese intelligence, learned of the move of the ship convoy and decided to attack it. On 10 August, six submarines left bases in Northern Norway and on 16 August, the heavy cruiser "Admiral Scheer" which went around Novaya Zemlya from the north and entered the Kara Sea. The enemy was counting on the fact that in mid-August the Soviet convoy would pass through the Vil'kitskiy Strait and entered the Kara Sea where it would be caught by the "Admiral Scheer." Two enemy submarines (U-601 and U-251) were to provide the raider with data on the convoy's movement and the ice situation while the remaining four were to cover the cruiser from the side of the Barents Sea. However, the operation conceived of by the Nazi command to destroy the detachment of ships did not succeed.

Due to the fact that enemy submarines were active in the Kara Sea in 1942, the commander of the Northern Fleet ordered increased activities by our aviation. The bombers and ground attack planes were given the task of increasing the strikes against enemy airfields from which the enemy could make raids on the EON-18. In the straits of the Kara and Barents Seas, our submarines were on station and additional ship patrols were set out in the narrows. With the approach of the convoy to within range of our fighter aviation, it was made fully ready to provide cover for the ships from the air. On individual sectors of the route, ships from the attachment used a sub-avoidance zig-zag. Vigilance was particularly increased in going through the Yugorskiy Shar Strait and all the personnel was at battle stations, units of fire had been delivered to the guns and the depth charges were ready for immediate action in the event of the detection or attack by enemy submarines. Off Kildin Island the expedition was met by the destroyer "Gremyashchiy." Taking up its position behind the "Gremyashchiy" the detachment of ships on 14 October entered the Kola Strait.

Regardless of the difficult ice conditions of the crossing, the personnel of the EON-18 surmounted them with honor, having shown mass heroism. Exercises were conducted regularly on the ships for combat training and damage control. The weapons and combat equipment of the ships were maintained in constant combat readiness.

The experience of combat vessels over the Northern Seaway in 1942 showed that this route can be used for the relocating of ships between fleets. However, the moving of ships over such a route requires particularly careful preparation and all-round support.

For the purpose of redeploying ships from one fleet to another, in the course of the Great Patriotic War, a route across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans was employed. Over this route, in carrying out the decree of the State Defense Committee, in 1942-1943, the submarines L-15, L-16, S-51, S-54, S-55 and S-56 were moved from Kamchatka to Murmansk.<sup>3</sup>

On the routes the subs were moving, enemy naval forces and aviation were active, particularly submarines of the German Navy. Along with this, the personnel also had to endure severe storms, northern cold and tropical heat which tested their morale and professional skill. For example, often the strong storms damaged the subs' guardrailings, superstructure and radio antennas. Regardless of the designated difficulties, the submariners vigilantly stood the bridge watches, observing all the necessary precautionary measures.

Control over the submarines in the move from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy to Iceland was provided directly by the People's Commissar of the Navy and upon leaving from Reykjavik, the commander of the Northern Fleet. Such organization was the most effective. On the first leg of the move, only the People's Commissariat of the Navy possessed the necessary information on the situation and could influence the operations of the submarines. On the second leg, the commander of the Northern Fleet had greater opportunities. Submarines of the "S" class during the move were directly under the command of the commander of the submarine division. The subs traveled in two groups. In Halifax, the submarine L-15 was temporarily put under the divisional commander. In the aim of observing more security, the submarines moved from Reykjavik independently.

Upon agreement with the U.S. and English governments, our submarines at Dutch Harbor, San Francisco, at bases in Panama and Cuba as well as at Halifax and Reykjavik could obtain fuel, food and undergo overhaul.

To ensure secrecy, the commanders informed the crews of the purpose of the cruise only after the boats had left Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy for the Pacific. During the move radio silence was observed and observation was strengthened.

Nevertheless, they did not succeed in achieving secrecy for the move. Thus, at Dutch Harbor, the commander of our submarine L-15, from a conversation with an American soldier, unexpectedly learned that four "S" class submarines were arriving after them from Vladivostok. The garrulousness of the U.S. servicemen was utilized by enemy intelligence. On 11 October the submarine L-16 was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine 300 miles to the northwest of San Francisco.<sup>4</sup>

The achieving of secrecy was complicated by the fact that upon agreement with the U.S. Navy Command, our boats were to move along previously established routes, not deviating more than 15 miles from the general course, to pass certain points at a certain time and were to maintain contact with the command of the American bases by radio using open text.

With the sinking of the L-16, it became necessary to increase vigilance of the crew on the individual boats and to pay more attention to the standing of the bridge watches and improving the observation of the water surface and the air. This made it possible to promptly avoid torpedos which were repeatedly discovered on the routes of the move. Our submarines crossed the most dangerous

areas following the sub-avoidance zig-zag. As a result of the measures undertaken, the remaining five submarines reached the Northern Fleet safely.

We should also note the experience of redeploying ships from one fleet to another over the inland waterways, that is, rivers, canals and lakes. Thus, at the outset of the war, upon a decision of the State Defense Committee, 8 submarines (4 of the "K" class, 2 of the "L" class and 2 of the "S" class), 6 torpedo boats and 4 patrol boats left the Baltic Fleet over the White-Sea Baltic Canal for the Arctic.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, the need to shift ships from one sea theater of military operations to another increased even more. During the war years, for example, some 277 ships, including 15 submarines and 64 armored launches, were shifted from the Caspian Sea to the fleets and flotillas.<sup>6</sup> From these ships on 27 March in Baku, a separate submarine detachment (OOPL) was organized consisting of 4 "S" class submarines and 2 of the "M" class. The commander of the separate submarine division, Capt 2d Rank B. A. Uspenskiy, became the commander of the OOPL. The deputy chief of the Navy Shipbuilding Directorate, Engr-Capt 1st Rank N. V. Alekseyev, was the representative of the People's Commissariat of the Navy. With the commanders of the Caspian, Volga and White Sea Flotillas, with the organizations of industry and the People's Commissariat of the River Fleet, he clarified and coordinated the dates for starting the work, the stages for the movement of the boats and systematically informed the People's Commissariat of the Navy on the course of their redeployment.

At the end, the hulls of the submarines were demagnetized. On the route from Baku to Astrakhan, minesweeping was carried out, sunken vessels were cleared and the route was protected. Along the route points for supplying the personnel of the OOPL with food, fuel and other supplies were organized. The chief of the Emergency Rescue Directorate of the Navy assigned the OOPL one diving boat and a diver party for conducting emergency work in the event of necessity.

It was planned that the ships would move on their own steam from Astrakhan to Gorkiy and for this reason the necessary measures were taken on the boats to reduce the draft. For this purpose the solid ballast, storage batteries, 100-mm guns with ammunition, torpedo loading equipment, periscopes, ISA-M instruments and chargers, oxygen tanks and around 100 tons of spare parts were removed from the "S" class subs. Subs of the "M" class were not unloaded as they had a shallow draft.

Floating docks were the basic means for transporting the subs. For reducing their draft in the event of passing through shallow depths, these were equipped with special pontoons the use of which made it possible to reduce the draft of the dock with a "S" submarine to 1.2 m. It was planned that the docks would be escorted by a special diving boat from the Emergency Rescue Directorate (ASU) of the Navy as well as a barge from the White Sea Flotilla equipped with all supplies for providing aid in the event of a breakdown or running aground.

Important significance was given to the hydrometeorological support and this was provided by a hydrometeorological officer traveling with the detachment. He received all the necessary information from the Central Forecast Institute by radio via the Navies Signals Directorate.

In mid-April 1943, the subs left Baku and reached Arkhangelsk at the end of May. For purposes of secrecy the ships traveled in three groups. Along the entire route, the commander of the detachment was in contact with Moscow, Kuybyshev, Ulyanovsk and Gorkiy. Contact between the groups was also provided by radio.

From Topornya to Arkhangelsk, the subs were escorted by a detachment of minesweepers from the White Sea Flotilla. In carrying out antimine and air defense functions, they traveled ahead of each dock, frequently providing aid in pulling the docks off shoals and also served as a reliable means of communications between them.

In addition to the ships of the Volga and White Sea Flotillas, to provide cover against enemy air strikes, on individual sections of the move, fighter aviation was employed from the Gorkiy Corps Air Defense Region and the Rybinsk-Yaroslavl and Cherepovets-Vologda Divisional Air Defense Regions. Contact with the air defense staffs was by radio.

Naval engineers were the chiefs on all the docks and they directed all dock work. They were under the representative of the People's Commissariat of the Navy. They had a dockmaster, a mechanic and a boatsman. Representatives from the Navy Hydrographic Directorate were on the head dock and the end minesweeper.

Considering the experience of escorting the OOPL, in 1944, the submarines S-16, S-19 and S-17 were relocated from the Caspian to the Northern Fleet.

In the aim of reinforcing the antisubmarine defenses of the Black Sea Fleet, in June-July 1944, 6 large and 12 small subchasers and 12 torpedo boats were re-deployed from Arkhangelsk to the Black Sea. Three floating docks were used for the move from Arkhangelsk to Gorkiy, tugs from Gorkiy to Sarepta (near Stalingrad), and where the ships were moved by rail, special transporters and flatcars were assigned. The ships moved on their own power from Yeysk to their destinations.

A detachment of ships was organized from the subchasers and boats to be moved and this detachment was broken up into four groups: the first consisting of 6 large subchasers; the second of 12 torpedo boats; the third and fourth consisted of the small subchasers. Rear Adm D. D. Rogachev was appointed the commander of the detachment. A staff was organized under him. The commander of the detachment was subordinate to the deputy people's commissar of the navy for shipbuilding and during the period of the move was operationally under, respectively, the commanders of the White Sea and Volga Flotillas and the Black Sea Fleet.

The detachment was escorted by experienced divers having the necessary emergency rescue equipment. Ships of the White Sea Flotilla provided air and antimine defense for the groups of the detachment. In the aim of achieving secrecy, stops were not made in the large cities. During the entire move the personnel did not have shore leave. All the ships arrived at the destination in July.

Thus, the experience of moving submarines, large and small subchasers as well as torpedo boats from the Caspian to the Northern Fleet and from Arkhangelsk to

the Black Sea confirmed the possibility of using the inland waterways for the redeployment of naval ships.

During the years of the Great Patriotic War rail transport was also used for moving ships. Thus, with the preparations for the offensive by the Soviet troops in the south of the nation, at the beginning of 1944 four submarines (M-104, M-105, M-107 and M-119) were moved from the Northern to the Black Sea Fleets. Here the military council of the Northern Fleet ensured the readying of the subs for departure, the disassembly and loading on the transports, while the military council of the Black Sea Fleet launched the subs and carried out reassembly for commissioning them as part of the fleet.

The submarines left in four groups with the space of a day between. In the area of Murmansk, due to possible enemy air raids, two armored flatcars with antiaircraft weapons were included additionally in each train. The first train arrived in Poti on 6 June and the last on 8 June.<sup>7</sup>

In 1944, ten submarines were moved by three trains from the Pacific to the Black Sea Fleets by rail (a total length of over 11,000 km).<sup>8</sup> At the head of the trains came flatcars with cargo, then the submarines on transporters. Bringing up the rear were cars with the guards, kitchens, food and personnel. The first train arrived at Poti on 8 July, the second on 29 October and the third on 11 December.<sup>9</sup>

During the same year, in addition to submarines, surface vessels were also delivered from the Northern to the Pacific Fleets. Some 13 large and 20 small subchasers, 12 torpedo boats and 2 diving boats were transported by rail.<sup>10</sup>

Consequently, rail transport was used in the course of the war for redeploying ships between the oceans, seas, lakes and rivers, as well as for delivering ships from the shipyards to the fleets and flotillas. The high transport speed and independence from the seasons were among the advantages of rail movements over movements by water.

The experience in the redeploying of ships as obtained by the Soviet Navy during the years of the Great Patriotic War is of great importance at present and it merits closest attention and thorough study.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> TsVMA [Central Naval Archives], folio 2, inv. 9, file 429, sheets 1-96.

<sup>2</sup> I. A. Kozlov and V. S. Shlomin, "Krasnoznamenny Severnyy flot" [The Red Banner Northern Fleet], 2d Revised and Supplemented Edition, Voenizdat, 1977, p 93.

<sup>3</sup> TsVMA, folio 1, inv. 36788, sheet 1.

<sup>4</sup> "Boyevoy put' Sovetskogo Voenno-Morskogo Flota" [The Campaign Record of the Soviet Navy], 3d, Revised Edition, Voenizdat, 1974, p 222.

- <sup>5</sup> "Istoriya voyenno-morskogo iskusstva" [The History of Naval Art], Voenizdat, 1969, p 294; A. I. Kozlov and V. S. Shlomin, op. cit., p 93.
- <sup>6</sup> MORSKOY SBORNIK, No 6, 1976, p 23; VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 11, 1979, p 71.
- <sup>7</sup> TsvMA, folio 163, file 6006, sheets 92, 162.
- <sup>8</sup> S. Ye. Zakharov, et al., "Krasnoznamennyy Tikhookeanskiy flot" [The Red Banner Pacific Fleet], Voenizdat, 1981, p 151.
- <sup>9</sup> TsvMA, folio 88, file 36938, sheet 72; folio 141, file 9554, sheet 7.
- <sup>10</sup> S. Ye. Zakharov, et al., op. cit., p 151.

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#### ACTIVITIES OF FREE GERMANY COMMITTEE ON SOVIET FRONT TRACED

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[Article by Doctor of Historical Sciences, Col Willi Wolf of the GDR Military History Institute: "On the Activities of the National Free Germany Committee on the Soviet-German Front (on the 40th Anniversary of Its Formation)"]

[Text] During the years of World War II, the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) was the sole political force in the nation which organized and headed the struggle of the German people against fascism which since the very first days of its coming to power had subjected the communists to the fiercest repression. Many party organizations were destroyed, the party leadership on various levels was arrested and the links between the party bodies were disrupted. The well-known party leaders were forced to leave the nation. The KPD suffered enormous losses. Of its 300,000 members, around 150,000 persons were persecuted and tens of thousands became the victims of a merciless bloody terror.<sup>1</sup>

But regardless of this, the Nazis did not succeed in breaking the unity and purposeful struggle of the communists. The KPD at its conferences in Brussels (1935) and Bern (1939) worked out a clear program of anti-Nazi struggle. It urged the working class to unite and create a broad anti-Nazi front which would bring together all the opponents of Hitler. Finally, the party formulated the end goal of the struggle against fascism which consisted in the creation of a democratic republic. The unceasing struggle of the KPD to unite all the anti-Hitler forces was an important prerequisite for the founding of the National Free Germany Committee [NFGC].

Also of important significance was the circumstance that, regardless of certain successes at the outset of the war, the Wehrmacht had been unable to carry out its task of destroying the Soviet state. The heroic victory of the Soviet Army at Stalingrad marked the beginning of a fundamental change in the war. From this victory the peoples of Europe began to gain new strength for fighting against the Nazi occupiers. The major defeat of the Wehrmacht caused a profound crisis in the Nazi regime. An increased number of persons began seriously thinking about the sense and goal of the war, they were concerned with the nation's future and endeavored to find a way out of the existing situation. Thus, favorable conditions were created for increased resistance to Naziism.<sup>2</sup>



Anti-Nazi moods were also growing stronger among the German prisoners of war in the USSR. In being guided by principles of internationalism, the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] and the Soviet government provided the German communists living in the Soviet Union with the opportunity of conducting active indoctrination among them. As a result of this, in the various prisoner of war camps in the USSR, anti-Nazi groups arose and ideological work was carried out regularly with them.

The conference held in Krasnogorsk (near Moscow) on 12-13 July 1943 was an indictment of fascism and the war. Its participants expressed concern over the future of Germany and stated their determination to liberate it from the Nazi butchers and build a peaceful democratic state. The conference established the National Free Germany Committee and unanimously approved the manifesto which set out the committee's goals and tasks. The National Committee issued this manifesto to the Wehrmacht personnel and all the German people. It emphasized that the NFGC had been organized at a moment of mortal danger hanging over the motherland and threatening its very existence. The further continuation of the senseless war created a threat to the existence of the very nation. If the German people would promptly understand all of this and actually show their readiness to liberate Germany from Hitler, it would win itself the right to a future. This was the only way to save the life, freedom and honor of the German nation.<sup>3</sup>

At the concluding session, 38 persons were elected members of the National Committee and the communist writer Eric Weinert the president. Of the members of the KPD Central Committee living in the Soviet Union, Wilhelm Pik, Anton Akermann, Wilhelm Florin and Walter Ulbricht were also members.

At the very first session of the NFGC, a number of basic organizational questions was settled: on the structure of the national Committee, the publishing of the weekly FREIES DEUTSCHLAND, the establishing of the Free Germany Radio, and the sending of representatives from the National Committee to conduct anti-Nazi work on each of the fronts and in the prisoner of war camps.<sup>4</sup>

Under the leadership of the KPD and from the example of the NFGC, committees of the anti-Nazi movement were subsequently established in Denmark, France, Greece, Great Britain, Yugoslavia, Latin America, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and other countries. This significantly helped to strengthen the struggle against the Hitler regime.<sup>5</sup>

In a magazine article it is impossible to take up the anti-Nazi struggle which developed in the different countries of the world. For this reason we will limit ourselves to just a partial description of the activities of the NFGC on the Soviet-German Front.

The Soviet government made available to the National Committee a radio and a printing plant and allowed the sending of committee representatives to the areas of the Soviet Army's combat operations and these with the aid of the political bodies developed active propaganda aimed at the personnel of the Wehrmacht units and formations. In the radio broadcasts, leaflets and other agitation materials, the representatives of the Free Germany Committee unmasked the predatory nature of the war by Nazi Germany, they spoke of the inevitability

of defeat for German imperialism, and appealed to the national self-awareness of the servicemen, urging them to act in the interests of the people and the fatherland, to put an end to the war and in groups or individually to come over to the side of the National Committee.

The frontline activities of the committee occurred under the difficult conditions of a class clash of the sides. The German soldiers and the German population, particularly the youth, were exposed to Nazi propaganda on a daily basis. As a result of the ideological anesthetizing in a nationalistic, militaristic spirit, a significant portion of the German soldiers continued to consider the voluntary surrendering as a betrayal of the state.

Not only Nazi propaganda and demagogic promises of various benefits after the "victorious" end of the war, but primarily the entire bestial system of Nazi terror forced the German soldiers to continue the hopeless struggle. The surveillance, slander and persecution of all dissidents were daily phenomena in the life of the Wehrmacht. Hitler Germany was suffering one defeat after another. Correspondingly terror increased. During the war years the military courts handed down around 27,000 sentences of death for servicemen and condemned up to 110,000 men to forced labor. The families of the persons participating in the Free Germany movement were subjected to fierce persecution.<sup>6</sup> In such a situation it was very difficult in a short period of time and with comparatively limited forces and means to fundamentally alter the ideology of the Nazi soldiers and officers.

The powerful blows of the Red Army, undoubtedly, increased the determination of many German soldiers to follow the appeals of the National Committee. But not all of them were ready to come over to the side of the National Committee. Many tried to desert from the front in order, in sitting in the rear, to wait for the war's end. Virtually all the German soldiers who were under the sway of Nazi propaganda were mortally afraid of Soviet captivity and blindly believed that death awaited them there. A false feeling of military solidarity prevented a certain portion of the soldiers and officers from participating in the anti-Nazi movement.

The representatives of the NFGC on the front encountered similar and many other problems and difficulties. But this did not stop them. They used all means and methods to show the German soldiers the way out of the war.

✓ In August-September 1943 a frontline organization of the NFGC was established. There was an official representative of the National Committee under each staff of the front. Under its leadership on the staffs of the armies, as a rule, there were army points of the NFGC and officials who were concerned with the political indoctrination of the prisoners of war and helped prepare appeals on their behalf and to write letters to the German soldiers and officers. Under some Soviet divisions, the officials themselves conducted anti-Nazi trench and field broadcasts. Under the staffs of the seven Soviet fronts, there were anti-Nazi schools which trained personnel from the prisoners of war for conducting anti-Nazi work on the front. Many anti-Nazis studied in the central anti-Nazi courses.

The members of the frontline organization of the National Committee acted jointly with the bodies of the Soviet Army the duties of which included ideological propaganda amongst the enemy troops and population. The Soviet officers engaged in this area of ideological work had rich experience and willingly shared it with the German anti-Nazis. They acquainted them with the situation on one or another sector of the front, they provided information on the opposing units and formations, they provided an opportunity to talk with captured prisoners, and they helped work out the texts of leaflets and prepare broadcasts.<sup>7</sup>

Contact between the National Committee and its frontline organizations were provided by the Main Political Directorate of the RKKA [Worker-Peasant Red Army] and the frontline political bodies. The field service as well as radio and telephone communications were also used for these purposes.

The frontline propaganda activities of the German anti-Nazis started by informing the German soldiers via leaflets and broadcasts of the establishing of the NFGC and that its representatives were on the front in order to inform the German soldiers of the goals and tasks of this organization and to point out to them the way to leave the war. The names of the NFGC representatives on the front were given and advice provided on how to establish contact with them.

In working jointly with the political bodies as employees of the Soviet Army, the NFGC representatives appealed to the Wehrmacht personnel, endeavoring to persuade the soldiers and officers blinded by Nazi propaganda that the only sure way for them was to leave the war. By leaflets and using broadcasting and other means of propaganda, they disseminated the anti-Nazi ideas of the Free Germany Movement in the Wehrmacht troops.

A crucial role in this work was played by printed propaganda, chiefly leaflets published on behalf of the NFGC Presidium. These were centrally distributed on the Soviet-German Front among the German troops. These leaflets published the Manifesto of the National Committee, they took up the basic questions of the Free Germany Movement, they assessed the major events of the war and criticized the Nazi leadership, they unmasked the Nazi lies and propagandized the most important slogans of the National Committee.

In March 1944, the National Committee published a program document entitled "The National Committee to the People and Armed Forces: 25 Theses on the End of the War." It was published in a large run as leaflets. The 25 theses provided answers to the questions about the causes of the war, they told about the anti-Nazi coalition, they set forward tasks for the Free Germany Movement and unmasked the anti-Soviet Nazi propaganda. They gave recommendations on what each German serviceman should do in order to escape from the Nazi regime, to put an end to the war and create a German democratic state.

Among the many pamphlets published at the center by the National Committee, of important significance was the appeal of 50 captured German generals "To the People and Armed Forces" of 8 December 1944. In it the captured opponents of Hitler demanded the overthrow of Naziism and the end of the war before Germany was turned into a battlefield.

Also among the central publications of the National Committee was the newspaper FREIES DEUTSCHLAND.<sup>8</sup> It was widely distributed in the German prisoner of war camps and in tens of thousands of copies dropped by Soviet aircraft over the German troop positions. This newspaper provided information on all the major military and political events, it unmasked the Nazi system of enslavement and the traitorous military clique and propagandized friendship with the Soviet Union and the ideals of the Free Germany Movement. Along with this the National Committee also published the newspaper FREE GERMANY IN ILLUSTRATIONS designed basically for the Wehrmacht soldiers.

Thousands of leaflets were published during the period of battles by the frontline organizations of the National Committee and disseminated among the Wehrmacht soldiers and officers. They all had the emblem of the National Committee as well as the signature of the authors, their addresses and the numbers of the units and formations where they previously served.

The Supreme Wehrmacht Command and the staffs of the German units and formations issued hundreds of orders declaring punishments for the reading of the leaflets. Severe punishments were given out to those who endeavored to keep them, to tell others what they said and particularly to send them home.

However, the propaganda carried out by the anti-Nazis forced the Wehrmacht servicemen to think more and more about the war, its consequences and the future of Germany. The number of German soldiers carrying leaflets of the National Committee when captured consequently increased.

Of great importance in the work of the frontline organizations of the committee was also the sending of letters to the homeland. In order to force the German soldiers to continue to fight, they were told that the Soviet Army took no one prisoner and that they would be immediately executed. For these same reasons the Nazi leadership refused to receive letters from German prisoners of war from the USSR through the international Red Cross Organization. Under these conditions the dispatching of letters across the frontline contributed to the struggle against Nazism. A certain portion of the Germans learned from them the truth about the status of German prisoners of war in the Soviet Union and became persuaded of the falsehoods of the Nazis and their cruelty toward the former Wehrmacht soldiers. As Goebbels wrote in his diary with the aid of this prisoner of war mail, Bolshevik propaganda made headway into Germany.<sup>9</sup>

The prisoner of war letters were delivered to Germany with the aid of courageous anti-Nazis, initially across the frontline with prisoners of war sent back and then via the German military post. A large number of letters was carried across the frontline and turned over directly to the commanders of the opposing Wehrmacht units and formations. Well-known members of the National Committee such as Gen Art Walter von Seidlitz, Maj Gen, Dr Otto Korfes and others appealed to their former fellow servicemen or other higher commanders, they explained the existing situation and proposed providing aid to the National Committee. They appealed to the responsibility of the commanders of the units and formations to the German people and urged them to protect the life of their subordinates.

Along with printed propaganda, the German anti-Nazis also conducted extensive verbal propaganda on the front. The political bodies of the Soviet Army provided them with the necessary equipment in the form of powerful sound installations. The advantage of verbal propaganda was its directness. It was needed to prove the existence of the National Committee, since Nazi propaganda from the very outset asserted that in fact there was no such organization. The German antifascists gave their names, their former units and their address in Germany. As a rule, they spoke in local dialects and this further convinced the soldiers of the truthfulness of the broadcast.

Since the loudspeakers were set up in direct proximity of the frontline, sometimes conversations developed between the German anti-Nazis and the Wehrmacht soldiers. But as soon as the German command learned of these contacts, the subunits were immediately pulled back into the rear, an investigation was made and those participating in the talks were punished.

Frequently involved in the broadcasts were prisoners who appealed to the soldiers and officers from their former units and subunits. They stated how they had been taken prisoner, how they had been dealt with, they described the representatives of the frontline organization of the National Committee, they spoke about the strength of the Soviet Army and proposed that their friends cease the senseless resistance.

In the autumn of 1944 and the beginning of 1945, the command of the Soviet Army provided the German anti-Nazis with mobile medium- and short-wave service radios. One of them the Balticum Radio was used by the German anti-Nazis on the First Baltic Front. On its two wave lengths each day letters and appeals from captured soldiers and officers were broadcast. With the aid of the radios, the members of the frontline organization of the National Committee frequently entered into radio talks between the staffs of the German Army. On these wave lengths they spoke about the goals of the Free Germany Movement and asked that the radio operators disseminate their information among the German servicemen.

With permission from the Soviet Command anti-Nazi agitators were sent for agitation into the surrounded Wehrmacht troops. Thus, in the 1944 Belorussian Operation, in eliminating the surrounded grouping at Vitebsk, during the periods from 24 through 26 June, up to 50 anti-Nazi agitators were sent into the encircled group. Agitation was carried out on an even larger scale among the German troops surrounded in the area of Bobruysk. Here around 200 agitators were trained and sent into the troops.<sup>10</sup>

Such a form of anti-Nazi work seriously disturbed the German Upper Command. In mid-1944, it issued an order to all persons returning from captivity be arrested and sent to prison for the purpose of isolating them from the troops and civilian population.

An important task for the frontline organizations of the committee was to create groups of the Free Germany Movement in the Wehrmacht units and formations. The members of these anti-Nazi centers should conduct propaganda among their fellow servicemen, isolate the pro-Nazi elements and prepare conditions for the going over of the servicemen and the units to the side of the National Committee.

Members of the frontline organizations crossed the front line in large and small groups, more often at night, they convinced the soldiers and achieved their agreement to halt further resistance and to go over to the side of the National Committee.

"The participants of the Free Germany Movement," wrote the president of the NFGC, the communist writer Eric Weinert, "went to the front as frontline representatives or officials, hundreds and thousands risked their lives on the front line and moreover they crossed the front line and persuaded the soldiers to return to the homeland and to turn their weapons against the Nazi bandits. Many of them perished in this struggle and many fell into the hands of the butchers. These German soldiers...will live in the hearts of our people as their hero liberators."<sup>11</sup>

It is difficult to determine the direct successes of the German anti-Nazis in the activities of the frontline organizations, since many factors, primarily the powerful blows of the Soviet Army had a strong impact on the defeat of the Nazi troops. Victory in the Great Patriotic War was won primarily due to the superiority of the Soviet socialist system, to the leadership of the Communist Party over the armed struggle of the Soviet people, to advanced military art, to the better weapons and high fighting spirit of the Soviet soldiers. In this gigantic clash, the frontline activities of the NFGC played a humble role. Nevertheless it did make a definite contribution to the defeat of German Nazism. This was a portion of the anti-Nazi struggle of the German resistance which helped maintain the honor of the German people and create important prerequisites for the formation of the GDR. Many participants of the Free Germany Movement, including former prisoners of war, became active builders of socialism in the GDR and prominent party, state and military figures.

The actions of the frontline organization on the side of the Soviet Army show that, regardless of the Nazi atrocities against the Soviet people, even in that difficult time the traditions of friendship of the Soviet and German workers were maintained. The Soviet people indoctrinated by the Communist Party in a spirit of proletarian internationalism never identified Hitler's Nazi clique with the German people. The struggle of the frontline organization of the NFGC belongs in the historical tradition on the basis of which a strong military association has grown up between the USSR Armed Forces and the GDR National People's Army.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 "Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya" [Great Soviet Encyclopedia], Vol 12, 3d Edition, Moscow, Sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1973, p 1584.
- 2 "Deutschland im zweiten Weltkrieg," Vol 3, Berlin, 1979, pp 255-336.
- 3 "Sie kämpften für Deutschland. Zur Geschichte des Kampfes der Bewegung. Freies Deutschland bei der I. Ukrainischen Front der Sowjetarmee," Berlin, 1959, pp 146-151.

- <sup>4</sup> VOPROSY ISTORII KPSS, No 7, 1968, p 78.
- <sup>5</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, Voenizdat, 1976, p 412.
- <sup>6</sup> A. Blank and B. Lovel, "Nasha tsel'--svobodnaya Germaniya. Is istorii anti-fashistokogo dvizheniya 'Svobodnaya Germaniya' (1943-1945 gg.)" [Our Goal--A Free Germany. From the History of the Anti-Nazi Free German Movement (1943-1945)], Moscow, Mysl', 1969, p 208.
- <sup>7</sup> In less than 6 months (from the moment of the founding of the NEGC), upon orders of the NEGC 85 propaganda materials had been published with a total run of over 50 million copies. (M. I. Burtsev, "Prozreniye" [Foresight], Voenizdat, 1981, p 187).
- <sup>8</sup> The newspaper FREIES DEUTSCHLAND which was published in a run of 45,000-55,000 copies, had four large-sized pages like the Soviet newspapers PRAVDA and IZVESTIYA. A total of 120 issues were published: 24 in 1943, 52 in 1944 and 44 in 1945 (A. Blank and B. Lovel, op. cit., pp 224-226).
- <sup>9</sup> "Goebbels-Tagebücher aus den Jahren 1942-1943," Edited by L. P. Lochner, Zurich, 1948, p 28.
- <sup>10</sup> M. I. Burtsev, op. cit., pp 232-234.
- <sup>11</sup> A. S. Blank, "Kommunisticheskaya partiya Germanii v bor'be protiv fashist-skoy diktatury (1933-1945)" [The Communist Party of Germany in the Struggle Against the Nazi Dictatorship (1933-1945)], Moscow, Mysl', 1964, p 265.

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## PROBLEMS, PROGRESS DISCUSSED AT JOURNAL'S READER CONFERENCE

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 83 (signed to press 1 Jul 83) pp 87-89

[Unattributed article: "From a Reader Conference"]

[Text] On 15 March 1983, a reader conference on the materials of VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL was held at the Military History Institute of the USSR Ministry of Defense. The conference was opened by the Institute's chief, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Lt Gen P. A. Zhilin. He pointed out the importance and usefulness of an in-person exchange with the readers and the actual utility of a professional-like discussion of the materials published and those problems raised on the journal's pages.

The editor-in-chief, Lt Gen A. I. Yevseyev reported to the conference participants on the carrying out of the tasks confronting the journal as well as on the course of fulfilling the subject plan for 1983-1984.

In their comments the readers pointed out that in the publications of the journal they find the replies to many questions of interest to them and become acquainted with unknown or little-known documents and archival materials put into academic use for the first time. Along with this they pointed to certain shortcomings in the work of the editors and editorial board and voiced a number of useful advice and recommendations.

Col Yu. V. Plotnikov in his comment pointed out that VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL is a printed organ by which the military historians have an opportunity to acquaint a broad circle of readers with their new research, documents and materials. Along with good, informative articles written on a high ideological and theoretical level, a number of materials in the journal still does not satisfy the readers. In them are sometimes found lamentable mistakes and inaccuracies which reduce their value. The editors and editorial board must make a maximum effort to make the journal more interesting and necessary for various reader categories.

In the speaker's opinion, VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL should devote more attention to the basic battles and operations of the Great Patriotic War considering the new advances in military science and the previously unpublished documents. Its pages should deal more fully with the questions of the preparation



and conduct of secondary (little-known) operations such as, for example, the Nevel, Gorodok, Bitebsk, Bryansk and Smolensk.

Col R. A. Savushkin took up the question of the relationship of theory and practice, descriptiveness and generalizations. Historical descriptions, he pointed out, are the basis of military history science. If they are reduced in the journal, many historians are deprived of factual material. More must be written about the unsuccessful operations, the reasons for their inconclusiveness must be boldly brought out, he said, and we must also learn from mistakes.

In historical literature there still are a number of incorrect concepts and assertions and sometimes these are copied from one work into another. VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL has done little to combat this.

Col V. S. Shumikhin emphasized that VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL pays great attention to the military policy of the CPSU. There are articles in each issue on this problem. The authors of such articles are prominent political workers (Army Gen A. A. Yepishev, Col Gens G. V. Sredin and A. D. Lizichev, Lt Gen B. P. Utkin and others). However, a number of important problems, for example, the party's military organizational activities, have not been properly taken up. Here it would be very beneficial to publish documents on the individual periods of our state's history, on the armed services and branches of troops. On the journal's pages one would like to see more articles on the activities of the CPSU to train military personnel, the measures of the CPSU in the area of organizational development, the combat training of the armed services and branches of troops and so forth. Little-known military historical archival materials should be published more often. One might wish that the editors were more timely in publishing the articles.

Col K. B. Narulin in his comments took up the role of military history science in the military patriotic indoctrination of the youth. He expressed a desire for the journal to begin a heading devoted to the military history training of students in higher military schools, to more frequently publish materials on the advanced experience of pedagogues, to raise the educational and theoretical level of the articles and to avoid descriptiveness. In his opinion, more general articles should be published on the operations of the Great Patriotic War and the local wars, the current events section should be broadened in volume and materials should be published more often on the history of the Union republics and on the regions of Siberia and the Far East.

Col Ye. F. Yegorov in his speech praised the work of the editors in taking up the questions of Soviet military art on the journal's pages. At the same time, he expressed a wish for the even-wider propagandizing of the invaluable experience of the Great Patriotic War. On the journal's pages the readers want to see good articles on the operations from the initial period of the Great Patriotic War, the organizing and carrying out of the retreat of the troops, the achieving of surprise in the course of the offensive and so forth. Complete discussions of any problems are particularly interesting for the readers.

The journal should publish both general and descriptive articles. There must be a thorough and true treatment of events and facts, their analysis, a correct evaluation and good conclusions.

Col I. I. Rostunov emphasized that VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL does not publish enough materials on the pre-October period. While the heroic aspect of the armed struggle is rather fully taken up, the experience of the combat operations of the armed forces is little propagandized. More should be done to show the work of the special military history commissions on generalizing the experience of the Russian Army, for example, in the Russo-Turkish War, and bringing the information to the knowledge of the troops. Few new archival documents, particularly on the pre-Soviet period, are being put into scholarly circulation. Special-subject articles on Soviet source research are printed very rarely.

Col N. G. Andronnikov devoted his comments to materials found in the heading "Memoirs and Essays." He pointed out a majority of authors in this genre in being participants in the Civil and Great Patriotic Wars, in their memoirs tell about operations and battles in which they were involved and about glorious Soviet military leaders. However, a reader develops contradictory feelings when the author (in the described period the commander of a subunit or unit), in referring to archival documents studied before the writing of the article, describes the situation and draws conclusions not on a tactical but rather on an operational and even a strategic scale.

Some thought should be given to publishing, along with articles about the Heroes of the Soviet Union and the holders of the Order of Glory, memoirs about the rank-and-file soldiers and officers of the Soviet Army who were not commended with high decorations and about workers in the defense industry. Here the authors should be working people and employees from the central staff who could provide new materials on the activities of prominent party and state leaders.

Col A. S. Yakushevskiy pointed out that VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL publishes few articles on foreign subjects, particularly on the history of local wars, military conflicts and the history of military art in the armies of the capitalist and developing countries. Due to the fact that recently many Western historians have intensified their activities in underplaying the role of the Soviet Army in the general victory over Nazi Germany and to belittling the military art of our military leaders, it would be desirable to publish more materials disclosing these unworthy falsifications.

Col O. F. Suvenirov expressed a wish to increase the scientific level of the articles published in the journal. He pointed to individual errors and inaccuracies in the materials published in the journal. For example, in the article by N. Klimov published in the first issue of 1983, it was erroneously asserted that the turning point in the course of the Great Patriotic War occurred in the Battle of Moscow.

Col V. D. Danilov pointed out that military historians wait for the publishing of each issue of the journal with satisfaction and great interest. He expressed a desire that the pages of the journal deal more widely with the questions of the organizational development of the Armed Forces in the prewar years, having paid particular attention to disclosing the trends and patterns in the organizational development and training of the Army and Navy to repel possible aggression from Nazi Germany; to more widely involve scholars from the Military

History Institute as authors and reviewers of publications being prepared. The journal should provide annual reviews of military history problems.

In summing up the results of the conference, Lt Gen P. A. Zhilin emphasized the necessity of more widely involving prominent military leaders in the publications of the journal. He pointed out that their rich frontline experience must be more boldly used for training the troops now. The journal must bring together survey articles and articles of an applied nature which would be useful and interesting for the higher, middle and lower command personnel of the Armed Forces. Articles for jubilee dates and battles should not repeat old materials. The editors must give some thought to improving the artistic format of the journal.

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BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON I. A. KHALEPSKIY GIVEN ON ANNIVERSARY

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 83 (signed to press 1 Jul 83) pp 94-96

[Article by Col Gen Sig Trps N. Popov: "Army Cmdr 2d Rank I. A. Khalepskiy (on the 90th Anniversary of His Birthday)"]

[Text] Innokentiy Andreyevich Khalepskiy made a major contribution to the founding and development of the signal troops and to the mechanized troops of the Red Army. He also did a great deal in the area of developing the theory and practice of military communications and the development of motor and armored equipment.

I. A. Khalepskiy was born on 2 (14) July 1893 in the town of Minusinsk of Yenisey Province (now Krasnoyarsk Kray) in a tailor's family. He commenced his working life at the age of 16. Initially he worked as a line installer on the Minusinsk telegraph and then as a telegraph operator at the Krasnoyarsk post and telegraph office. In this institution Innokentiy Khalepskiy joined the trade union of postal and telegraph workers.

After the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, I. A. Khalepskiy without hesitating took the side of Soviet power and participated actively in the work of the trade union organization. As one of the respected and active trade union members, the communications workers of Krasnoyarsk elected him a delegate to the First All-Russian Proletarian Congress of Postal-Telegraph Workers. At the congress he was elected a member of this trade union's Central Revolutionary Committee.

The year 1918 was full of important events in the life of Innokentiy Andreyevich. He became a communist and volunteered for the ranks of the defenders of the Soviet republic. In a Red Guard detachment he fought against the enemies of the revolution at Narva. As an experienced signals specialist, I. A. Khalepskiy in June 1918 was sent to the Eastern Front and appointed the signals chief of the 3d Army which was conducting stubborn battles against the rebel Czechoslovak corps and White Guards in the region of Perm, Yekaterinburg and Ishim. In October 1918, he became the extraordinary signals commissar of all the fronts of the operational army and skillfully organized the work of the signal troops in ensuring dependable troop control.

For improving the organization of military communications and utilizing state communications for military purposes, in March 1919, I. A. Khalepskiy was sent to the Ukraine and appointed republic people's commissar for the posts and telegraphs. In a short period of time, under his leadership, the work of all the communications services was set up.

In the autumn of 1919, the Red Army was fighting on a broad front, the maneuverability of the troops had increased and control of them was more complex. The most experienced signalmen, including Innokentiy Andreyevich Khalepskiy, were sent to the operational army. In October of the same year he was appointed extraordinary signals representative of the Southern Front. Later he headed the signal troops of the Southwestern and then the Caucasus Fronts. During his very first days on the Southern Front I. A. Khalepskiy realized that many shortcomings in the organization of communications were caused by the decentralizing of leadership over military communications on the army level. In his report to the commander of the front A. I. Yegorov, he pointed out: "All military equipment and troops of the front have their own inspectorate, technical leadership and supervision over the training of specialists and special property by the appropriate directorates. The sole sector of military equipment on the front, and perhaps the most important in its significance, the signals service does not have its own technical leadership."<sup>1</sup>

The concern of I. A. Khalepskiy was shared by the deputy chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council E. M. Sklyanskiy and the deputy people's commissar of the post and telegraph A. M. Lyubovich. Upon their suggestion the Council of Worker and Peasant Defense instructed the RVSR [Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic] to examine the draft proposal on the central control of field communications under the Field Staff. On 20 October 1919, on the basis of the RVSR decision, Order No 1736/362 was issued according to which the Signals Directorate of the Red Army was to be created headed by a signals chief while on the fronts there were to be headquarters, in the armies and divisions there would be sections, and in the brigades signals departments. This same document established the position of signals chiefs of a front, army, division and brigade. The RKKA [Worker-Peasant Red Army] Signals Directorate had responsibility for organizing and ensuring the communications of the RVSR and the Field Staff with the fronts and the armies, for forming the signals units, for their manning as well as for training the personnel and providing communications equipment.

In July 1920, I. A. Khalepskiy was appointed to the staff of the chief of the Red Army Signals Directorate (USKA). Initially, he was the assistant and then the deputy signals chief of the Red Army. On 29 September 1920, Innokentiy Andreyevich Khalepskiy became the chief of the USKA. In this position he devoted great attention to organizing and maintaining dependable communications with the operational fronts, the industrial and administrative centers in the southwest and south of Russia.

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<sup>1</sup> "Istoriya razvitiya voysk svyazi" [History of the Development of the Signals Troops], Voenizdat, 1980, p 64.

I. A. Khalepskiy headed the Communications Directorate until 1924, having shown high organizational abilities in leading the signals troops. He devoted a great deal of attention to working the questions of their combat employment. In 1924, for example, his works were published "Voyska svyazi i ikh naznachenie" [The Signal Troops and Their Purpose] and "Svyaz' v polku, batal'one i rote pri nastuplenii (Organizatsiya i ustroystvo)" [Signals in the Regiment, Battalion and Company on the Offensive (Organization and Working Principles)] and in 1926 his book was published "Rol' i znachenie radiotekhniki v Krasnoy Armii i radiolyubitel'stvo" [Role and Significance of Radio Equipment in the Red Army and Ham Radios].

One of the difficult tasks which I. A. Khalepskiy had to carry out was the problem of providing the signal troops with skilled command, engineer and technical personnel. The training of signal troops which at that time was carried out in the system of the engineer troops was complicated by the lack of the corresponding training facilities. The signals command courses set up during the Civil War and the Higher Military Electrical Engineering School did not fully meet the requirements of the signal units and facilities for command personnel. Because of this the Higher Military Signals School was established and the Higher Military Electrical Engineering School was reorganized as the Military Electrical Engineering Academy. Upon the initiative of I. A. Khalepskiy, the signals school and the academy recruited active participants of the Civil War from among the signals chiefs of the divisions, brigades and regiments as well as commanders of the signals units and subunits who had combat experience but needed greater general and special training. A number of secondary signal troops schools was opened.

From 1924 to 1929, Innokentiy Andreyevich Khalepskiy was the chief of the Military Technical Directorate of the RKKA, and in 1929-1934, the chief of the Directorate for Motorization and Mechanization, while in December 1934 he became the chief of the RKKA Motor Vehicle and Armored Directorate. While in these positions, he carried out great work in the area of the organizational development of the Soviet motorized and mechanized troops and in developing armored equipment. The works "Sovremennaya tekhnika i voyna" [Modern Equipment and War] and "Tekhnika i voyna" [Technology and War] were devoted to this problem.

In 1932, I. A. Khalepskiy became a member of the USSR Revolutionary Military Council. In 1935, he was given the military rank of Army Commander 2d Rank.

In April 1937, Innokentiy Andreyevich was appointed the USSR People's Commissar for Communications. He worked in this responsible post for around a year and in this short period of time did a great deal to develop state communications and ready it for the severe wartime testings. I. A. Khalepskiy was highly regarded among the signal troops and always supported anything that was new and advanced. He took an active part in the nation's social life and was twice elected a member of the All-Union Central Executive Committee at the All-Russian Congresses Soviets.

The Soviet state had high regard for the accomplishments of Innokentiy Andreyevich Khalepskiy. For participation in the defeat of the Denikin troops during the years of the Civil War, he received the Red Banner, and in 1933, for

particular accomplishments in the area of equipping the RKKA with combat equipment, he received the Order of Lenin.

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